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**A qualitative multi-level analysis of factors influencing the diffusion and practice of teleworking among employees  
insights from within three organisations**

Jones, Amanda

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King's College London

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**Author:** Amanda Jones

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**A QUALITATIVE MULTI-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF  
FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DIFFUSION AND  
PRACTICE OF TELEWORKING AMONG EMPLOYEES:  
INSIGHTS FROM WITHIN THREE ORGANISATIONS**

**Amanda Jane Jones**

**King's College London**

**Submitted February 2013**

Thesis submitted for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies

## **Abstract**

Teleworking remains a limited practice in organisations despite its widely reported potential to produce benefits for employers, employees and society as a whole. The reasons for the limited spread of telework are not wholly understood. Past research contributes to this lack of clarity by excluding from analysis data relating to those who refrain from permitting or practising telework, and by neglecting the contextual and situational conditions within which teleworking is implemented. The central aim of this thesis is to address these deficiencies in previous research by examining factors which influence the differential diffusion and practice of teleworking within organisations, through contextually-based, multi-level, qualitative research.

Four specific research questions focus the study towards: examination of industry, organisation and job specific factors; senior and lower-level managers' attitudes and approach to telework; non-teleworkers' attitudes and approach to telework; and teleworkers' individual characteristics and experiences of telework. The research draws upon one hundred semi-structured interviews with teleworkers, non-teleworkers and ex-teleworkers, as well as with managers and senior managers in three organisations: a local authority; a telecommunications organisation and a high-technology firm. The analysis also makes use of focus group and observational data.

The study identifies a reinforcing relationship between industry, organisational and job specific factors which influences organisations' strategic use of telework. It highlights senior managers' strong influence on lower-level managers' approach to telework and the manner in which telework is experienced within the workgroup. Teleworkers' experiences and expected gender roles are also shown to influence employees' differential participation in telework. The research develops typologies of different 'types' of job roles and voluntary teleworkers in relation to these factors and so clarifies the different imperatives governing use of telework within organisations.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Figures .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Table of Tables .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1. CHAPTER 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Research background .....	13
1.2 The aims of the study .....	16
1.3 Outline of the thesis.....	18
1.4 Summary .....	20
<b>2. CHAPTER 2: Development, Definitions and Descriptions of Telework.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	21
2.2 The emergence of telework .....	21
2.3 Defining telework and related concepts .....	24
2.3.1 The location of telework .....	25
2.3.2 How people telework .....	26
2.3.3 Contract of employment.....	27
2.3.4 Additional criteria .....	27
2.4 Who teleworks? .....	28
2.5 Why telework? .....	29
2.5.1 Rationale for society .....	29
2.5.2 Individuals' rationales .....	30
2.5.3 Employer rationales .....	30
2.6 The uptake of telework.....	31
2.7 Why is the uptake of telework so limited? .....	32
2.8 The definition of telework within the study .....	33

2.9	Summary .....	34
<b>3.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 3: Literature Review and Research Framework .....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	35
3.2	The Supply of telework .....	35
3.2.1	Managements' motivations and concerns with respect to telework .....	36
3.2.2	Group and social factors .....	44
3.2.3	Employee selection .....	46
3.2.4	Contextual factors .....	50
3.2.5	Research considerations regarding the supply of telework .....	56
3.2.6	Conclusions relating to the supply of telework .....	57
3.3	Employees' demand for telework .....	57
3.3.1	Employees' experiences of telework .....	58
3.3.2	The influence of individual factors .....	66
3.3.3	Research considerations relating to employees' demand for telework .....	71
3.3.4	Conclusion relating to the demand for telework .....	72
3.4	Research framework and research questions .....	73
3.4.1	Overarching research question – The diffusion and practice of telework .....	73
3.4.2	Research framework and specific research questions .....	74
<b>4.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 4: Methodology and Research Context .....</b>	<b>80</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	80
4.2	Choice of research approach .....	80
4.2.1	Grounded theory method .....	81
4.2.2	Ontological and epistemological position .....	81
4.2.3	Historical and contextual position .....	82
4.2.4	Benefits of theoretical sensitivity and sampling .....	82
4.3	The research context .....	84
4.3.1	Local-Gov .....	84
4.3.2	High-Tech .....	85
4.3.3	Tel-Com .....	86
4.4	Choice of research sites .....	87
4.5	Study informants .....	88
4.5.1	Differences between the samples at the focus organisations .....	88
4.5.2	Additional sample information .....	89

4.5.3	Considerations.....	90
4.5.4	Selection of participants.....	90
4.6	Procedure and analysis .....	92
4.6.1	Data triangulation.....	92
4.6.2	Interviews.....	92
4.6.3	Focus groups .....	93
4.6.4	Direct and participant observation .....	94
4.6.5	Supplementary information.....	94
4.7	Data analysis.....	95
4.7.1	Coding.....	95
4.7.2	Memoing.....	97
4.7.3	Analytical tools .....	97
4.8	Ethical considerations.....	98
4.8.1	Disclosure and consent.....	98
4.8.2	Contextual sensitivity.....	99
4.8.3	Data security and anonymity.....	99
4.9	Summary .....	100
<b>5.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 5: Telework and the Organisational Environment .....</b>	<b>101</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	101
5.2	Where telework is a good fit; High-tech .....	101
5.3	Where telework is a bad fit; Local-Gov .....	105
5.4	Where the fit of telework is ambiguous; Tel-Com .....	111
5.5	Support for employee-led telework.....	114
5.5.1	Standardised roles – low-level, equivalent skills .....	115
5.5.2	Independent roles – high level, specialist skills .....	117
5.5.3	Collaborative teamwork – high-level complementary skills.....	118
5.6	Support for telework as a practical strategy .....	120
5.7	Support for telework as a retention strategy.....	120
5.8	Roles where telework is employer-led .....	121
5.8.1	Involuntary telework.....	121
5.8.2	Roles in which telework was prohibited .....	121
5.9	Summary .....	124

<b>6. CHAPTER 6: Telework and Managers .....</b>	<b>125</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	125
6.2 Managers' expected behaviour .....	125
6.2.1 Telework as the organisational norm .....	126
6.2.2 Telework as the exception .....	128
6.2.3 Telework and 'situational suitability' .....	131
6.3 Suitability of telework within subordinates' roles.....	133
6.3.1 The effect of telework on subordinates' autonomy and managers' trust .....	133
6.3.2 The effect of telework on subordinates' communication .....	136
6.3.3 The effect of telework on subordinates' well-being .....	137
6.3.4 The effect of telework on subordinates' relationships.....	138
6.3.5 The effect of telework on subordinates' learning and development .....	140
6.3.6 The creation of teleworking norms within job roles .....	142
6.4 Subordinates' personal circumstances .....	143
6.5 Managers' responses to telework.....	144
6.5.1 Support and facilitation.....	145
6.5.2 Appeasement and concealment.....	148
6.5.3 Discouragement and restriction.....	150
6.5.4 Prohibition and withdrawal .....	152
6.6 Summary .....	153
<b>7. CHAPTER 7: Telework and the Workgroup .....</b>	<b>155</b>
7.1 Introduction .....	155
7.2 Non-teleworkers' perceptions of telework within their organisation .....	155
7.2.1 Teleworking is inevitable – High-Tech .....	155
7.2.2 Teleworking is undesirable: Local-Gov .....	157
7.2.3 The benefits of teleworking are ambiguous – Tel-Com .....	162
7.3 Non-teleworkers' perceptions of telework in different job roles.....	164
7.3.1 Internal-standardised roles .....	165
7.3.2 External-standardised roles .....	166
7.3.3 Non-technical teams.....	169
7.3.4 Technical teams.....	171
7.3.5 Internal-independent roles.....	173
7.3.6 External-independent roles .....	174



7.4	Non-teleworkers' perceptions of teleworkers' personal circumstances .....	175
7.5	Non-teleworkers' perceptions of acceptable teleworker behavior .....	178
7.6	The norm of acceptable telework .....	182
7.7	The norm of unacceptable telework .....	184
7.8	Non-teleworkers' behavioural responses to telework.....	185
7.8.1	Overt resistance.....	185
7.8.2	Covert resistance.....	187
7.8.3	Indifference .....	188
7.8.4	Supportive behaviour .....	189
7.9	Summary .....	191
<b>8.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 8: Teleworkers' Motivations and Experiences .....</b>	<b>192</b>
8.1	Introduction .....	192
8.2	Motivations for teleworking.....	192
8.2.1	Teleworking to enhance performance and prospects.....	192
8.2.2	Teleworking for personal needs .....	196
8.2.3	Teleworking to improve lifestyle .....	197
8.3	The influence of the home-working environment.....	199
8.3.1	The experience of the teleworking mother.....	200
8.3.2	The experience of the teleworking father.....	204
8.4	Teleworkers' experiences and outcomes: A typology of voluntary teleworkers. ....	206
8.4.1	'Enhancers' – When telework is beneficial for a role or task.....	207
8.4.2	'Balancers' – Where telework is negotiated out of preference.....	211
8.4.3	'Reciprocators' - Where telework is provided for personal needs .....	214
8.4.4	'Appeasers' – Where continued telework is conditional on acceptable behaviour .....	217
8.4.5	'Avoiders' – Where continued telework is conditional on concealment .....	219
8.4.6	'Retainers' – Where continued telework is reliant on external support.....	222
8.5	Summary .....	227
<b>9.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 9: Discussion of the findings .....</b>	<b>228</b>
9.1	Introduction .....	228
9.2	Q1. What is the influence of industry, organisational and job-specific factors on the diffusion and practice of teleworking? .....	230
9.2.1	The strategic use of telework within different job roles.....	230

9.2.2	Organisational policies and practices .....	234
9.2.3	Trade unions.....	237
9.2.4	Industry and organisational norms .....	237
9.3	Q2. How do senior managers and lower-level managers affect the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements? .....	239
9.3.1	Senior managers.....	239
9.3.2	Senior managers' support for telework .....	239
9.3.3	Senior managers' behaviour towards telework .....	240
9.3.4	Lower-level managers.....	241
9.3.5	Managers' participation in telework.....	242
9.3.6	Prohibiting telework.....	242
9.3.7	Displays of unsupportive behaviour.....	243
9.3.8	Classification of telework .....	244
9.3.9	Management of teleworkers.....	245
9.4	Q3. How do non-teleworkers affect the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements? .....	247
9.4.1	Projecting consequences .....	248
9.4.2	Rewarding preferred behaviour.....	248
9.4.3	Sidelining teleworkers.....	250
9.4.4	Encouraging teleworkers' presence.....	251
9.5	Q4. How do teleworkers' experiences and the gender and domestic circumstances of the teleworker affect the diffusion and practice of telework in organisations? .....	252
9.5.1	Teleworkers' experiences of telework .....	252
9.5.2	Teleworkers' gender and domestic circumstances .....	257
9.6	Summary of the key findings .....	261
<b>10.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 10: Summary and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>265</b>
10.1	Introduction .....	265
10.2	Overview of the thesis .....	265
10.3	Contributions of the study .....	269
10.3.1	The research approach .....	269
10.3.2	Typology of job roles .....	270
10.3.3	Senior managers' and managers' behaviour .....	270
10.3.4	Non-teleworkers.....	271
10.3.5	Typology of voluntary teleworkers .....	271

10.3.6	Gender and domestic circumstances .....	272
10.4	Implications of the study .....	272
10.5	Limitations.....	277
10.6	Future research .....	278
10.7	Summary .....	280
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>		<b>281</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>		<b>312</b>

## **Table of Figures**

Figure 3.1: Research framework .....	75
Figure 5.1: Strategic use of telework within job roles .....	123
Figure 9.1: The process of establishing and maintaining acceptable telework .....	229

## **Table of Tables**

Table 4.1: Sample demographics .....	88
Table 8.1: Typology of voluntary teleworkers .....	226

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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Research background**

Flexible working has been celebrated as a necessary organisational and societal response to a changing marketplace and a transformed labour force (Boxall and Purcell, 2003). Within this context, “telework,” which in this study denotes home-based telework, has been described as ‘one of the most radical departures from standard working conditions in the suite of flexible working practices’ (Daniels et al, 2001: 1151). Whereas other flexible working methods enhance flexibility by challenging established working-time norms, telework adds a unique dimension: that of remoteness. This distinct element of telework presents unique opportunities for organisations and employees to adapt to the challenges of the modern world (Bartel et al, 2012; Belanger, 1999b; Mahler, 2012).

Now more than ever, organisations face pressure to reduce costs while simultaneously being required to exceed customer expectations in the face of continued skill shortages (Clinton et al, 2011; 2012). Advocates of telework present the practice as a panacea for contemporary organisations faced with such challenges (Egan, 1997; Mahler, 2012). Implementing telework can reduce office space, thus facilitating a reduction in required real estate which directly benefits the bottom line (Daniels et al, 2001; Mahler, 2012). Skill shortages can be mitigated through improvements to recruitment and retention, which derive from allowing increasingly overworked employees the opportunity to manage their competing work and non-work demands (Apgar, 1998; Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Crandall and Gao, 2005; Green, 2001; 2006; Kossek et al, 2006; Manoochchhri and Pinkerton, 2003). Finally, through providing telework, organisations can reap the benefits of satisfied and productive staff who use their enhanced autonomy to fulfil customer needs and provide superior customer service (Hardill and Green, 2003; Mahler, 2012).

For employees, the opportunity to manage the competing demands of their professional and domestic lives (Hardill and Green, 2003) is becoming ever more important as increasing numbers of women, and especially women with young children, enter the workforce (Walsh, 2001). An increase in dual-earner couples challenges women’s traditional role as

primary carer and encourages men to look for ways to improve their involvement in the family home (Marsh and Musson, 2008; Stevens et al, 2004). It is argued that the flexibility afforded through teleworking enables employees to optimise their work and domestic commitments in the most desirable way, thus providing fulfilment in both domains (Siha and Monroe, 2006). Consequently, telework should provide a win-win solution for employers and employees who both stand to gain from the flexibility it provides to overcome the challenges inherent in contemporary society (Mahler, 2012).

However, despite these benefits, telework remains a limited practice among the workforce. Census data from 2011 suggest that just 5.5% of those working in England and Wales worked mainly at or from home. While the number of people spending at least some of their working week located at home is estimated to be higher, at 15.3 % (Felstead, 2012), these numbers still fall short of previous estimations and the shift towards telework is recognised to be far slower than expected (i.e. Lees, 1999; Scase, 1999 - in Felstead, 2012). These figures also include self-employed teleworkers, meaning that the level of teleworking practised among employees is lower still (CIPD, 2006; Felstead, 2012; IRS, 2006; Price, 2001; Siha and Monroe, 2006). In the past, inadequate technology and an economy based on manufacturing, where job roles relied more heavily on employees' physical presence at a workplace, provided clear explanations for the limited diffusion and practice of telework (Urze, 2005; Pilskin, 1998). However, rapid technical growth and the rise of the service economy have increased the number of "teleworkable" jobs, where the completion of tasks does not intrinsically depend on the worker's location (Felstead, 2012; Kippenberger, 2000). Given these developments and the benefits cited above, the limited uptake of telework in today's workforce is surprising.

It is uncertain whether the slow uptake of telework is attributable to limited supply or to limited demand (Siha and Monroe, 2006). The CBI reported that in 2011, 59% of workplaces offered telework. Thus on paper, telework appears to be widely available. However, lower-level managers still have a notable influence on the supply of telework and its limited spread has been attributed to their reluctance to manage the demands of a 'blended workforce' and to relinquish traditional forms of control (Lautsch et al, 2009; Perez et al, 2002). Yet, while some studies have uncovered low levels of interest in telework among managers (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Huws et al, 1990), others reveal



more favourable perceptions (e.g. Watad and DiSanzo, 2000). The reasons for managers' differing approaches to telework are largely unknown, though a contributing factor may be ambiguity regarding appropriate circumstances in which to supply telework. In particular, in the literature there is disagreement regarding which job roles are most conducive to telework, and little is known about how the suitability of job roles is affected by the context of work.

From the perspective of employee demand, the prospect of experiencing social and professional isolation from working remotely, and work-family conflict from bringing work into the home, have been identified as drawbacks of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). However, a recent meta-analysis suggested that telework had a small but positive effect on individuals' job satisfaction, autonomy and work-life conflict (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), a factor which should enhance demand. Furthermore, data suggests that disproportionate numbers of men perform telework (LFS, 2005). It is uncertain, however, why more women do not seek to engage in telework, particularly given its potential to enhance work-life balance (Lautsch et al, 2009; Silver, 1993).

Overall, the literature indicates that while the benefits of telework do stimulate its uptake, the drawbacks stifle the number of employees participating in telework. However, there is a notable lack of clarity regarding how and when the opportunities and challenges created by telework influence its uptake and the manner in which it is practised (Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Siha and Monroe, 2006). Two primary issues with respect to previous research contribute to this lack of clarity.

First, teleworkers are often the primary focus of studies, to the neglect of managers and non-teleworkers (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Fogarty et al, 2011; Golden, 2006b; 2007). Studies which focus exclusively on teleworkers themselves limit our understanding of the factors which contribute to both the supply of and demand for telework, by excluding from analysis those who refrain from permitting or practising telework. Teleworkers, and especially voluntary teleworkers, are also likely to have self-selected suitability for telework, leading them to report disproportionately positive consequences from teleworking (Peters et al, 2004). Consequently, it is argued that a realistic picture of the anticipated and experienced consequences of teleworking can only be achieved through accessing the

perspectives of non-teleworkers and managers as well as teleworkers. Second, definitional ambiguity regarding what it means to be a teleworker makes a comparison of existing studies difficult (Sullivan, 2003). In relation to this, previous studies often neglect the contextual and situational factors which frame the practice of telework, inhibiting our understanding of the conditions which lead to diverse outcomes (Dimitrova, 2003).

In order to understand the consequences of telework, researchers emphasise the value of acquiring more qualitative data and of collecting responses from the individual, group and organisation level (Belanger and Collins, 1998; Ellison, 1999; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Lautsch et al, 2009). A qualitative multi-level approach may also shed light on the factors which influence the supply of and demand for telework within organisations, and the contextual and situational conditions which influence teleworkers' propensity to participate in telework (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

Should an enhanced understanding of the impediments to telework aid its expansion, advantages may accrue not only to organisations and their employees, but to society as a whole. Governments in numerous countries have attempted to harness the benefits of telework in order to tackle pressing environmental issues such as congestion and pollution (through decreasing travel and therefore fuel consumption), and to facilitate improved societal well-being. For example, the UK government has championed telework as a mechanism for reducing unemployment (Felstead et al, 2002) and, as a self-appointed "model" employer, has shown interest in the documented advantages to employees (Gibson and Luck, 2004). A study which examines the impediments to telework uptake is therefore both desirable and timely.

## **1.2 The aims of the study**

Following from the previous discussion, the primary aim of the study is to investigate the factors which influence the diffusion and practice of telework in organisations. The study seeks to provide a framework for understanding how the diffusion and practice of telework are influenced by contextual, social, and individual factors. Four specific research

questions, presented in chapter 3, guide the investigation towards reducing the identified research gaps highlighted above, and are related to the following areas:

First, the study aims to analyse the influence of industry and organisational context and the characteristics of jobs on the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations. The intention is to overcome the dearth of research relating to the supply of telework and, in particular, to overcome disagreements regarding which characteristics of job roles are most conducive to telework.

Second, the study aims to provide an enhanced understanding of senior managers' and lower-level managers' influence on the diffusion and practice of telework. Previous studies have not expressly considered how senior managers' own approach to telework influences the practice of telework among employees, beyond determining its availability. The study also aims to shed light on the reasons for lower-level managers' differential approaches to telework and to identify how their approach affects employees' participation in telework within different circumstances.

Third, the study aims to pay specific attention to the influence of the work-group, and especially non-teleworkers, on the diffusion and practice of telework. The intention is to provide insights into employees' reasons for abstaining from telework and for returning to the office following their experiences of telework.

Fourth, related to the previous aim, the study intends to investigate the relationship between employees' experiences of telework and their participation in the practice. In particular, attention will be paid to teleworkers' gender and domestic circumstances alongside their professional demands. The intention is to clarify the outcomes of teleworking for employees performing different job roles and, in particular, for men and women with a view to understanding their differential participation in telework.

The study's primary contribution is intended to derive from the unique approach taken in investigating the diffusion and practice of telework. An evolved grounded theory methodology (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) is felt to be appropriate for the study, as the study seeks to provide new and substantial insights into the 'social world' of employees (Corbin

and Strauss, 2008; Pandit, 1996). This approach directs the investigation towards an analysis of the relationship between the conditions under which telework is employed and the consequences experienced by employees (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Thus the evolved grounded theory methodology provides a useful tool for addressing the recognised research gaps. By considering multiple levels of analysis, collecting data from a large number of diverse informants, and paying specific attention to contextual and situational factors, the study aims to provide a better understanding of the differential diffusion and practice of telework in organisations (Dimitrova, 2003; Ellison, 1999; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Kossek et al, 2006).

### **1.3 Outline of the thesis**

This thesis is presented in ten chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 outlines the historical development of the concept and practice of telework. It discusses the various definitions of telework, which lead to challenges in determining the actual number of teleworkers within the workforce, and to ambiguity when interpreting extant research findings. The chapter expands on the potential benefits of telework for multiple parties and the potential reasons for the limited uptake of telework in the face of these recognised benefits. Finally, the chapter outlines the definition of telework used in this study.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on telework with the aim of identifying the factors which relate to the supply of telework within organisations and the demand for telework among employees. The chapter considers the limitations of previous research and identifies research gaps which prevent a thorough understanding of the limited uptake of telework within the employed workforce. Finally, the chapter presents specific research questions which target the investigation towards narrowing the research gaps identified.

Chapter 4 outlines the research approach and explains the justification for selecting an evolved grounded theory methodology, based on Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). The chapter provides a description of the research context and the rationale for including the three organisations selected for participation. Details of the sample, procedure, and the method of data analysis are also provided.

Chapters 5-8 present the empirical findings of the research. Chapter 5 examines the industry, organisational and job specific factors which influence the supply of telework and the perceived level of organisational support for telework among participants. The chapter presents a typology of six 'types' of job role which, together with the organisation's strategic approach to telework, determine the perceived benefit to the organisation of supplying telework.

Chapter 6 presents the empirical findings with respect to senior managers' and lower-level managers' responses. The chapter investigates the experiences of senior managers and lower-level managers within teleworking environments and outlines their resultant actions towards employees with respect to telework. Particular attention is given to managers' expected behaviour and their perceived suitability of telework within subordinates' job roles and personal circumstances.

Chapter 7 presents the empirical findings with respect to non-teleworkers' responses. The chapter investigates the perceptions and experiences of teleworkers' peer-level colleagues, their subordinates and those who support telework. A key focus of the chapter is the personal and professional consequences of telework for non-teleworkers. Non-teleworkers' identified behaviours towards teleworkers within particular conditions are also outlined.

Chapter 8 presents the empirical findings which relate to teleworkers' responses. Factors within teleworkers' work and non-work environments which influence their decision to telework are considered. This chapter presents a framework which outlines six 'types' of voluntary teleworker based on teleworkers' behaviour and their experiences of telework.

Chapter 9 provides an integrated discussion of the empirical findings presented in chapters 5-8 with respect to the specific research questions proposed, and presents a summary of the key findings.

Finally, Chapter 10 provides a summary of the thesis, and highlights the contributions and implications of the research. The limitations of the study are also considered and some avenues for future research are proposed.

## **1.4 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the aims of the thesis and provided a background to the study. The importance of telework to organisations, employees and society as a whole was highlighted. It was demonstrated that, despite recognised advantages, the incidence of teleworking remains limited among employees. It was argued that a contextually-based, multi-level qualitative research approach is required to identify the factors that explain why employees' participation in telework is inhibited. An outline was provided of the study's approach, as well as the research questions and structure of the thesis. The next chapter provides an introduction to telework by outlining the development of the concept and practice of telework, and explaining the features of telework in greater depth.

## **CHAPTER 2: Development, Definitions and Descriptions of Telework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an introduction to telework, to outline the background of this type of working practice, and to describe how it has been conceptualised and utilised to date. The chapter commences with a description of the historical development of telework, moves on to present the definitions and uses associated with the term, and then considers factors related to the concept and practice of teleworking which help to contextualise and distinguish between various arrangements. Following from this, and expanding upon chapter one, the benefits of telework are outlined for multiple parties and potential reasons for the limited uptake of telework in light of these benefits are discussed. Finally, the chapter outlines the definition of telework used within this thesis.

### **2.2 The emergence of telework**

The practice of remote work (decentralised work conducted at locations outside of an organisation's premises) is by no means new and has been conducted for many years, especially in the tailoring industry where it was widespread from the 1850s until the beginning of the First World War. Historically, remote workers were based at home, conducted unskilled tasks and were remunerated on a piece-rate basis (Pennington and Westover, 1989). As a result, the traditional view of the remote worker was a low-paid female employee working from home, existing on the periphery of the workforce and attempting to supplement the family income (Kraut and Grambsch, 1987). However, though the concept or reality of home-working is not new, the purpose and rationale of homework and the demographics of homeworkers have changed a great deal in recent years. Telecommunications innovations permit white-collar employees to work from remote locations, via the medium of 'telework' (defined below), meaning that the type of work conducted under a homeworking arrangement can range from low-paid, routine labour to skilled knowledge work (Haddon and Brynkin, 2005).

‘Teleworking’ entered the public domain as a method of conducting white-collar work in the 1970’s around the time of the energy crisis and was endorsed by Jack Nilles (1975) for its capacity to reduce commuting and preserve fossil fuels in the face of dwindling supplies. In parallel, an alternative group of liberal commentators (i.e. Bell, 1973; Schumacker, 1973) were championing teleworking as they believed it could facilitate a greener environment, whilst freeing employees from the oppression of industrial society and the confines of the office. Later, these approaches merged to form the utopian view of the ‘electronic cottage’, prophesized in Toffler’s *The Third Wave* (1981). In contrast to the traditional view of homeworking, a common theme of all these approaches was an assumption that teleworkers would be middle class, professional, male employees (Huws, 1991). Yet, during this period white-collar work had been rapidly expanding due to the changing makeup of the economy, with female employees entering white-collar jobs in higher numbers (Hardill and Green, 2003; Kraut and Gambusch, 1987). However, in 1991, Ursula Huws, an influential early commentator in the field of telework, described how many believed women’s new professional roles would lead to an inevitable neglect of their domestic duties. Consequently, cheaper and more advanced technology enabled telework to be reconceptualised away from a male-dominated working utopia into a practical solution facilitating the utilisation of female labour in low-skilled white-collar work, whilst still enabling them to conduct their unpaid domestic roles in the home (Huws, 1991).

A consequence of the increase in female clerical work conducted in the home was seemingly a notable division of labour between men and women on homeworking arrangements and a stark difference in their circumstances and experiences of homeworking. In a pioneering study of female clerical workers on homeworking arrangements, Huws (1984) identified the typical female homemaker as married and in her mid-30’s, working in poor conditions, unrepresented in employment and isolated, a discovery which was echoed elsewhere (Olson and Primps, 1984). In many cases among these clerical women:

*‘Telework did not present itself as a perfect solution to any problem, it was merely one of a range of possible compromises available to [women] during periods of their lives when they were torn between the irreconcilable demands of wage earning and caring’ (Huws, 1991)*



This did not appear to be the same for men, as Wajcman and Probert (1988) reported that while female homeworkers were indeed clerical workers with general skills and low pay, male homeworkers were predominantly highly paid, specialist, technical or managerial workers. This polarisation between female and male experiences of telework seemingly stems from the ‘bad’ and ‘good’ outcomes of office automation as described by Margrethe Olson, a prominent telework researcher during this period. More specifically, clerical jobs, predominantly held by women appeared to suffer de-skilling and lessened benefits as new technologies were introduced, whereas technical and managerial jobs, held predominantly by men, benefitted from leveraging these technologies to gain ‘career enhancement and skill acquisition’ (Olson, 1992).

A further shift in perceptions occurred during the late 1980s when teleworking was presented as a means for engendering flexibility in organisations in the face of an inhospitable economic climate and stiff foreign competition. Here, the focus on gender was reduced in favour of a less emotive, economic conceptualisation of flexibility from the perspective of the employer, as a means for facilitating flexible, timely and efficient production. However, in spite of this new slant, many commentators at the time still remarked on the way that telework could enhance organisational adaptability and, at the same time, provide the benefit of flexibility to women who struggled to balance competing domestic demands with often necessary income generation (Huws, 1991).

The demise of the nuclear family has been credited with contributing to a resurgence of homeworking as employees experience changes in their domestic arrangements and responsibilities (Hill et al, 2003; Huws, 1991; Peters et al, 2004). An increase in dual-earner couples means that when a male employee changes work location, his female spouse does not automatically uproot and move to the location of her husband’s new employment as may have been expected in the past (Hardill and Green, 2003). Furthermore, aside from parental employment and income, many families consider the stability of their children’s schooling, their comparative position in the local property market and their social connections when deciding on a desirable family base (Hardill and Green, 2003). Additionally, rising working hours, downsized workforces and a greater demand for flexibility from both employees and clients have caused individuals, organisations and governments to take a closer look at teleworking’s possible benefits (Boxall and Purcell,

2003; Gibson et al, 2002; Mirvis and Hall, 1996). However, in more recent years, authors have continued to champion the benefits of telework for both men and women as well as for employers as a means of rectifying the competing demands often placed on them by the modern world (Kossek et al, 2006; Marsh and Musson, 2008). These benefits will shortly be outlined but first, due to the changing conceptualisations described in this section, it is necessary to clarify the terms and definitions surrounding telework.

### **2.3 Defining telework and related concepts**

There are a number of definitions of telework, often leading to diverse sampling and inconsistent results within the research as well as confusion over what it means to be a teleworker and the actual prevalence of telework in the workforce (Flemming and Hughes - Flexibility, 2002; Sullivan, 2003). When looking to avoid definitional ambiguity, a beneficial starting point is clarification of popular terms within this field of study.

In the literature, 'homeworking' involves 'working at home for either part or all of an employee's contracted working hours as opposed to working in an office or other workplace' (UNISON, 2006). Essentially, homeworking is any work undertaken in the home environment, regardless of the method employed. This definition can incorporate traditional forms of homeworking, such as piece-rate work. In recent years, home-based jobs are characterised more by knowledge work and are supported by various modern technologies such as telephones, personal computers and the internet, which allow remote employees regular or even constant contact with the office. This form of work, utilising information and communication technologies (ICTs) has come to be known as 'teleworking.' Similarly in the US 'Telecommuting', a term first coined by Nilles (1975) is defined as 'working outside the conventional workplace and communicating with it by way of telecommunications or computer based technology' (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). As 'telecommuting' is synonymous with teleworking the term will be disregarded in this study in favour of 'teleworking'.

Ruiz and Walling (2005: 418) define teleworkers as:

*‘Paid or unpaid workers who use a phone or personal computer, whether they work at home full-time or occasionally and where it is supported by various technologies’.*

Therefore, unsurprisingly some confusion exists over the difference between homeworking and teleworking. Indeed, some scholars take them to be one and the same (Schepp, 1995; Teo and Lin, 1998), while others believe work conducted in the home which is unsupported by technology constitutes ‘homeworking,’ whereas teleworking necessitates technological support (Ellison, 1999). However, while ‘homeworking’ requires a home office by definition, telework can take place from either the home or from alternative locations outside the office such as a telecentre and does not necessarily involve the home at all. Consequently, where an employee works from home rather than an alternative workplace in a manner that is supported by technology this is commonly referred to as ‘home-based telework’. Furthermore, both telework and home-based telework comprise forms of distributed work where employees conduct tasks from dispersed geographic locations which may be fixed or unfixed (often called ‘Nomadic Telework’ or ‘Mobile Telework’). Where this work is conducted through electronic networks, often asynchronously, it is also referred to as ‘virtual work’ (Merriman et al, 2007). Finally, both dispersed and conventional office based employees can be involved in virtual team working where their tasks involve collaboration through electronic means with colleagues at other locations (Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Workman et al, 2003).

### **2.3.1 The location of telework**

While studies focusing on any or all areas of telework provide useful and relevant insights into the antecedents, outcomes and experiences of dispersed work in different contexts, distinguishing between the methods of work is vital (Haddon and Brynin, 2005). For example, Hill et al’s (2003) study of traditional, home and virtual office workers at IBM demonstrates that the location from which work is performed can affect the outcomes of alternative work methods and therefore our ability to make sense of and ultimately compare and generalise results to a wider setting. They found that although both non-home-based

virtual teleworkers and home-based teleworkers reported better outcomes than traditional office workers, significant differences existed between them. In particular, while working from a home office had a positive effect on home and family life; virtual working outside the home appeared to have a negative effect in this area. Hill et al (2003) provide the explanation that homeworkers were more able than virtual office workers to establish boundaries between work and non-work as they were not provided with the means to work anywhere. Additionally homeworkers' avoidance of the commute was credited with improving the time they could dedicate to non-work activities.

### **2.3.2 How people telework**

Evidence indicates that teleworking employees conduct telework on a continuum from 'always' to 'very occasionally,' which for ease of definition and applicability is generally divided into the following four types. Supplementary teleworking occurs where the individual performs conventional hours in the office, but additionally completes tasks at home often at weekends or in the evenings (Duxbury et al, 1996; Fenner and Renn, 2004). Part-time teleworking allows individuals to conduct part of their working week from home (on an agreed basis), with the remainder of their time spent in the office. Occasional teleworking allows an individual, who is primarily office-based, to work from home at certain times or on particular projects, which may be agreed in advance or may be carried out on an ad hoc basis. Finally, dedicated teleworking sees the individual's primary place of employment stated as 'home' in the employment contract. Often dedicated teleworkers do not have an allocated desk in the office and conduct all or the majority of their work from home (Sullivan, 2003).

Employees may telework on either a part-day or full-day basis. The former describes teleworking which is conducted for part of the day with the employee's remaining time spent either in the office or at other meetings (Haddad et al, 2009). It is felt to be important to distinguish between part-day and full-day teleworking as it will inevitably result in different outcomes for employees relating to factors such as work-life balance and isolation. Furthermore, Haddad et al's (2009) findings from their large scale survey of the UK workforce indicate that individuals were motivated to pursue part or full-day homeworking for different reasons. In particular, part-day homeworking was strongly

associated with the desire to avoid workplace interruptions, whereas whole day homeworking was strongly associated with the desire to avoid commuting.

### **2.3.3 Contract of employment**

A further area in need of clarification is the employment status of the teleworker. It is useful to distinguish between employed and self-employed teleworkers (Sullivan, 2003) because studies show that these teleworkers are often from different demographics and have diverse experiences (Staden et al, 1999). In particular, self-employed teleworkers may enjoy more independence, flexibility and autonomy than employed teleworkers (Felstead and Jewson, 2000) and will be unlikely to experience problems of managerial surveillance and co-worker jealousy (see below). However, they often suffer greater instability and income uncertainty, need to rely more heavily on family and friends, and may receive less expert help with tasks (Jurik, 1998).

### **2.3.4 Additional criteria**

The potential for variation in the location and method of telework, outlined above, has led to suggestions that the general definitions of telework used by some should be replaced with those standardised against specific criteria (Staden et al, 1999), or at least should be more project specific (Sullivan, 2003). As teleworkers comprise a heterogeneous group, and the outcomes of a teleworking initiative are thought to be determined by intervening organisational factors, it has been argued that best practice solutions are impossible to prescribe without specifying the conditions under which they should be implemented (Dimitrova, 2003). In addition to the factors specific to particular environments mentioned above, further differences between arrangements which warrant consideration when comparing findings include but are not limited to: organisational determinants such as industry and culture; management control methods; co-worker relations; individual teleworkers' job roles, domestic circumstances and personal characteristics. These aspects will be examined in depth in the following chapters.

## **2.4 Who teleworks?**

Studies of teleworkers have identified variations in their demographic characteristics. With regards to occupation, The Labour Force Survey (2007) revealed that in the UK nine out of ten teleworkers worked in managerial, professional, associate professional, technical and skilled trades professions. With regards to gender, in the US there is an even distribution of telework by gender, but full-time teleworkers were predominantly male, relatively young and receive higher earnings. By contrast, part-time teleworkers were predominantly older female workers with lower comparative earnings (Cyber Dialogue Survey, 2000). IRS data indicate that in the UK two thirds of teleworkers were male and a third female (IRS, 2006). Industry clustering is evident as men predominate in industries with greater numbers of teleworkers and female teleworkers are more prevalent where teleworking is more unusual (Labour Market Trends, 2002). This is corroborated by the Workplace Employee Relations Survey (2004), where teleworking was shown to be used more extensively in the banking, finance and insurance sectors, and generally in workplaces where there was a lower incidence of female employees. Interestingly, male teleworkers are much more likely to conduct their work from different locations outside of the home and female teleworkers are much more likely to conduct the majority of their work from the home (Ruiz and Walling, 2005).

In terms of company characteristics and teleworking uptake, Mayo et al's (2009) study of 122 CEOs from various organisations in Spain revealed that small organisations, organisations with a high percentage of international employees and organisations utilising a strategy of performance-based compensation were the most likely to adopt teleworking. Additionally, they found that firms with more international employees and younger organisations were more likely to adopt teleworking where leaders used a contingent-reward style which refers to a focus on rewarding outcomes as opposed to office-presence. They suggest that this may be due to smaller firms' higher propensity to innovate. As mentioned in the previous section, these employee and organisational characteristics may have important implications for individuals' experiences of telework. To better understand these implications in the next section we will turn to the proposed benefits of telework, followed by a more detailed discussion of the reported uptake of teleworking in the workforce.

## **2.5 Why telework?**

The benefits of teleworking for multiple parties have been widely reported with proposed beneficiaries comprising not only teleworking individuals, but organisations, clients and society as a whole (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Crandall and Gao, 2005; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Pearce, 2009). Importantly, in order for any party to realise these benefits, organisations must be willing to provide telework, employees must be incentivised to participate in it and, as national policies and interventions which support teleworking are considered essential, governments must be inspired to produce them (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996). The following section outlines the potential rationales for the pursuit of teleworking for each of the beneficiaries discussed within the teleworking literature to date.

### **2.5.1 Rationale for society**

The UK government has championed telework through initiatives such as the Work-Life Balance campaign 2000 and legislative measures such as the *Employment Act* 2002, as a mechanism for reducing unemployment and improving the quality of working life (Felstead et al, 2002). Successive governments in the UK and elsewhere believe that the availability of home-based employment allows individuals who otherwise would find it difficult to obtain or maintain employment to be included in the workforce (Baker et al, 2006). Such individuals include mothers, disabled employees and the elderly (Kraut and Grambsch, 1987). Furthermore, improving individuals' control and enhancing flexibility in their daily lives may result in an important increase in 'quality-time' for families, liberating society from what some believe is a downward spiral of societal fragmentation and the depreciation of traditional values. More specifically, unruly offspring and elderly relatives of absent, overworked employees can once again be adequately cared for by them, restoring the essence of 'community'. Importantly, utilising teleworking arrangements can be achieved without families suffering economically and without carers needing to sacrifice their own careers (Guest, 2002).

Both within the UK and elsewhere, governments, transportation planners and environmentalists have expressed excitement at teleworking's potential capacity for

reducing congestion on the roads, conserving fuel and preventing further declines in air quality (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996; Hardill and Green, 2003; Feldman and Gainey, 1997; Pearce, 2009). Indeed, environmentally-minded individuals may pursue a teleworking arrangement in order to reduce emissions. To illustrate: in 2006 the Telework Association petitioned the UK Prime Minister via their website to take teleworking into equal consideration with road tariff pricing as a method of pollution reduction.

### **2.5.2 Individuals' rationales**

According to the literature, teleworking individuals may opt to work from home for a number of reasons. These include a desire to experience improved individual productivity through reducing workplace distractions (e.g. Apgar, 1998; Bailyn, 1988; Crandall and Gao, 2005; Haddad et al, 2009; Hartman et al, 1992) or to increase life or job satisfaction (e.g. Bailyn, 1989; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003), through gaining greater autonomy (Crandall and Gao, 2005; Kurland and Bailey, 1999). Additionally, a widely offered reason for choosing telework is employees' desire to reconcile work and non-work commitments (Hill et al, 2003). Work-life balance improvements can be achieved through these previous advantages and through teleworking's utility in freeing up commuting time and decreasing stress (Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Haddad et al, 2009; Shamir and Salomon, 1985). Furthermore, some individuals are attracted by the opportunities to make cost savings from avoiding travel and the reduced cost of lunches and working attire (Belanger and Collins, 1999). Finally, there are some who, due to domestic circumstances or disabilities, may pursue teleworking as either the only feasible means of conducting paid employment (Baruch, 2001; Simpson et al, 2003), or because it is the preference of not just the teleworker, but others in the domestic environment (Haddad et al, 2009).

### **2.5.3 Employer rationales**

On the supply side, there have been a number of widely cited benefits encouraging employers to adopt telework. Teleworking is thought to enhance workforce flexibility which, along with reciprocation from grateful and satisfied teleworking employees, acts to facilitate productivity (Apgar, 1998) and improve customer service quality and availability (Watad and DiSanzo, 2000; Gibson and Luck, 2004). Furthermore, teleworking provision



may encourage the attraction and retention of staff and reduce absenteeism (Huws, 1993; Kurland and Bailey, 1999). Consequently, for these reasons teleworking may assist organisations in maintaining staffing levels and protecting investments in training. Additionally, the opportunity to reduce real estate costs is a strong incentive to employers (Egan, 1997). Indeed, a number of well-known organisations have reportedly made significant cost savings from implementing telework; including Rank Zerox who reportedly saved over £300,000 per year over a decade ago from the closure of one of its central London offices (Hamblin et al, 1995). Finally, there are significant Public Relations advantages from appearing to offer an employment practice that caters to employees' needs, enhances client service and benefits society in general.

## **2.6 The uptake of telework**

Due to the definitional issues surrounding telework discussed above, determining precise numbers of teleworkers in the economy can be extremely challenging (Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Felstead et al, 2005). For example, Census data offered by the Office of National Statistics suggests that in 2011 around 5.5% of the employed population of England and Wales worked mainly at or from home. However, these figures do not take into account those who work at home occasionally. Felstead (2012) calculated that 15.3% of employees spend at least some of their working week located at home. It should be noted, however, that many reported teleworkers can be considered 'white van men' who are self-employed individuals, such as builders and plumbers, who work in a 'nomadic' fashion and maintain contact with their clients through electronic means (CIPD, 2006; IRS, 2006).

Consequently, although these data can provide interesting information relating to changes in the expansion of telework and working practices for the self-employed, they are less informative about levels of teleworking among employees. What is evident is that an increase in the level of what we conventionally conceive as employed teleworkers is seemingly less dramatic than it initially appears or indeed has been expected to appear. In reality only 37% of teleworkers in the UK are employees which amount to around 4% of the workforce (CIPD, 2006). These data imply that despite the potential for mutual benefits outlined above, there are very few employees on home-based teleworking arrangements. In

the mid-1990s analysts predicted that 10% of the UK's employees would be conducting at least part of their working week from home by the year 2000 (Siha and Monroe, 2006). Furthermore, managers and professional were anticipated to be conducting 33% of their tasks at home by 2006 and up to half by 2010 (i.e. Lees, 1999; Scase, 1999 - cited in Felstead, 2012: 32). However, many practitioners and academics have acknowledged that the anticipated growth of telework has not occurred (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Felstead, 2012; Friedman, 1998; Haddon and Brynin, 2005; Hill et al, 2003; Martínez-Sánchez, 2009; Pilskin, 1998; Price, 2001; Pyoria, 2003; Siha and Monroe, 2006).

Alternative data presents a more positive picture for the expansion of telework, suggesting that its availability has increased from within 14% to within 59% of workplaces in the past five years (CBI, 2006 - 2011). However, the number of workers reporting regular participation in telework does not appear to have risen in line with such trends with only 2.9 % of employees reporting that they work mainly at home (Felstead, 2012). Comparison of these findings confirms the position that the availability of telework does not necessarily equate to its prevalence (Kossek et al, 2006) and indicates that the practice of telework remains limited in the face of reports of enhanced availability. Furthermore, the diverse methods of teleworking outlined above also have varying degrees of popularity. According to the IRS survey data (May 2006), planned, regular teleworking is a fairly rare practice. Nomadic teleworking is slightly more popular, though is an arrangement dominated by sales staff and engineers. Ad-hoc, occasional teleworking is the most popular method, which suggests that teleworking is most commonly pursued in an informal and sporadic fashion rather than constituting a planned, strategic policy for organisations. Full-time, home-based teleworking is by far the least employed method, which is echoed by Hardill and Green's (2003) assertion that dedicated teleworkers are only present in 2% of EU companies.

## **2.7 Why is the uptake of telework so limited?**

In light of the motivations for teleworking presented above, why is the spread of teleworking, and in particular home-based teleworking, which was envisaged to be mutually beneficial to employers and employees, so limited? This question is central to the

investigation presented within this thesis. Three potential explanations are apparent from consideration of the literature, which warrant further investigation.

First, for managers, problems of employee control, learning and socialisation, organisational communication, the management of organisational culture and tensions between co-workers may detract from the outlined advantages, affecting their willingness to supply telework, even where it is available (Felstead, 2012; Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003).

Second, Pilskin (1998: 76) believes that the ‘on paper’ benefits of teleworking should cause it to thrive on economic grounds but it is the ‘psychological and sociological costs’ that prevent it from flourishing. Research has revealed that, in practice, individuals may also experience damaging emotional and psychological health effects, social isolation, and undesirable outcomes in the professional arena relating to pay and career progression and worsened work-family balance. All of these factors may depress demand for teleworking arrangements (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003).

Third and finally, it may be that more employees are teleworking in diverse ways which are not represented in the data due to the use of particular technical definitions of telework (Felstead, 2012; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). Consequently, many questions regarding the true nature of telework remain unanswered including why and how telework is practised to a different extent in different areas of the workforce. These factors will therefore be considered in depth within the following chapter.

## **2.8 The definition of telework within the study**

An investigation of the factors which affect employees’ participation in teleworking requires a definition of teleworking which is specific enough to allow the finding to be useful, yet broad enough to explore variation and gain an understanding of the true nature of teleworking practice (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). As many of the anticipated benefits of telework derive from improvements to employees’ non-work life, the definition of telework within the study reflects that used by the Ruiz and Walling outlined above (2005: 418) in

that it focuses on home-based telework. However, as organisations are the necessary suppliers of telework to much of the workforce, a focus on their influence regarding the uptake of telework is desired. Consequently, in the study Ruiz and Walling's definition is narrowed to include only the paid, employed workforce rather than the unpaid and self-employed workforce. Finally, rather than specifying how much time employees should spend teleworking to qualify as teleworkers, the study aims to investigate the factors that lead to variations in the extent to which telework is performed between employees.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter set out the context of teleworking by discussing its development and then outlining the definitional issues surrounding the concept and practice of telework. It was recognised that continued disagreement exists regarding the meaning of telework and that there is a necessity for researchers to clarify particular aspects of the arrangements under investigation in order to render studies useful, accessible and comparable. The demographics of teleworkers were subsequently outlined and the motivations of different parties for pursuing telework were considered. It was suggested that in spite of the potential advantages, the actual uptake of telework among employees appears to be extremely limited. This, it was argued, may reflect the challenges of implementing teleworking for organisations and the possible drawback for teleworkers. Alternatively it may be due to the problems of defining and sampling teleworkers which may lead to under-estimates of the real extent of telework. In order to understand the reality of teleworking, Chapter 3 will discuss the findings from the literature to date with regards to the factors which potentially influence the demand for and supply of telework from the perspectives of both employees and employers. Furthermore, differences in the experiences of telework among the workforce will be considered.

## **CHAPTER 3: Literature Review and Research Framework**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to consider the factors which relate to the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations and to present a research framework and research questions to further investigate the limited uptake of telework among employees. As discussed in Chapter 2, in order to understand why the diffusion and practice of telework remains limited, it is necessary to consider why organisations are failing to supply telework, or, why demand for telework among employees is limited (Siha and Monroe, 2006). Consideration of the factors which relate to the supply of and demand for telework will therefore be the focus of this chapter. A related aim is to identify where areas of consensus or disagreement exist within the literature, to highlight relevant research considerations and knowledge gaps, and to consider further areas for investigation which may help to illuminate the impediments to the uptake of telework in organisations.

The chapter begins by considering the factors which relate to the supply of telework. It outlines managerial attitudes and experiences of telework, and discusses the influence of social and wider contextual factors on the provision and practice of telework. The chapter moves on to consider the demand factors with respect to telework and outlines the evidence relating to the attitudes of teleworkers, the outcomes of performing telework for teleworking employees and the influence of individual factors on these attitudes and outcomes. Finally, drawing upon general conclusions from the literature a research framework and research questions are presented to target the investigation towards closing identified research gaps which impair our knowledge of the reasons for the limited uptake of telework among employees.

### **3.2 The Supply of telework**

Telework can only be performed where it is available. To gain a more complete understanding regarding the reasons for the limited uptake of telework it is therefore

necessary to consider the factors which influence its supply. In Chapter 2, it was suggested that managers' unwillingness to supply telework to subordinates may limit its uptake (Siha and Monroe, 2006). The following section considers the factors which may influence managers' supply of telework to employees.

### **3.2.1 Managements' motivations and concerns with respect to telework**

#### *Productivity*

Senior managers have been shown to be more likely to introduce telework where they believe it will enhance the competitive position of the organisation (Harrington and Ruppel, 1999; Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010). Consequently, if telework can improve employees' productivity, it should be an attractive practice to adopt. The majority of studies provide support for improved productivity among teleworking employees (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Neal et al, 1993; Pearce, 2009). Productivity gains are thought to derive from: reduced commuting time (Mariani, 2000); fewer workplace distractions to prevent employees from concentrating on their work; reduced absenteeism (Neufeld and Fang, 2006; Potter, 2003); and a shift from cultures where face-time is used as a proxy for productivity to a focus on achieving results (Crandall and Goa, 2005).

A clear example of documented productivity improvements occurred at IBM where 87% of teleworkers reported enhanced productivity (Apgar, 1998). Additionally, McCune (1998) reported significant productivity improvements from sales and managerial staff at AT&T as a result of staff moving to a teleworking arrangement. Some authors believe that, in reality, teleworkers are actually increasing their working hours which they mistakenly perceive as increased productivity (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997; Olson, 1985). Indeed, many studies show that teleworkers work longer hours than conventional employees (e.g. Chalmers, 2002; Dimitrova, 2003; Huws et al, 1990; Mann et al, 2000; Michelson, 1998). Additionally, increased productivity may not always translate into higher performance as Belanger discovered (1999a) that work produced by teleworkers and non-teleworkers was of equal quality. However, as teleworkers appear to be producing more of the same quality work than conventional employees, teleworking still appears advantageous for

organisations. Perhaps for this reason, the potential for productivity improvements among teleworking employees is acknowledged by employers (Crandall and Gao, 2005).

### *Recruitment, Retention and Absenteeism*

Improved recruitment, and reductions in both absenteeism and staff turnover are considered to be common motivations for and advantages of teleworking for organisations (Apgar, 1998; Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Crandall and Gao, 2005; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003), and in general studies provide support for improvements in these areas (Collins, 2005; Gibson et al, 2002; Hill et al, 2003; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Potter, 2003). Regarding recruitment, improvements can stem from widening the recruitment pool by allowing employees the flexibility to overcome restrictions that previously prevented them from working for certain organisations. For example, Simpson (2003) described how teleworking facilitated the employment of employees who lived at a great distance from the office. Additionally, Yap and Tng's (1990) Singapore-based study found that offering telework was an effective method of alleviating skills shortages by attracting female computer programmers into the workforce.

Regarding absenteeism, Huws (1993) concluded that teleworking employees were less likely to be absent and more likely to remain with the organisation than conventional employees. This conclusion is supported by a large survey of 14 European countries which found working away from the office consistently reduced absenteeism (Stavrou, 2005). In particular, studies suggest that teleworkers are more likely to work through illness (e.g. Mann et al, 2000) and less inclined to take time off for family needs (Frolick, 1993). Regarding turnover, evidence suggests that teleworking employees wish to remain with their organisation as they fear they will not find the same arrangement elsewhere (Bailyn, 1989; Frolick, 1993; Huws et al, 1996). Another explanation is that giving employees the opportunity to telework improves fairness perceptions and increases commitment. Indeed, in their survey of 191 voluntary teleworkers in multiple organisations, Kurland and Egan (1999) found that teleworking was positively related to perceptions of procedural and interactive justice among teleworkers and these perceptions increased the more employees teleworked. Positive justice perceptions have been linked to increased commitment, which

in turn has been linked to reduced absenteeism and lower intentions to quit (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al, 2001).

Finally, Golden (2006a) discovered that teleworking allows employees to stockpile resources by avoiding the face-to-face interactions and commuting obligations that result in emotional exhaustion and burnout. Golden believes that the ability of the individual to allocate these resources in a more favourable manner, along with the organisation's demonstrated commitment towards employee trust and supportiveness elicits commitment and reciprocation from teleworkers, ultimately reducing their intention to quit. Importantly Golden also found that this relationship between teleworking and commitment is strengthened the more employees telework. Conversely, Kossek et al (2006) found that there was no relationship between the amount employees' telework and their turnover intentions. However, despite some inconsistencies in the literature, in general, evidence for improved recruitment and retention and reduced absenteeism for teleworkers is positive (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

#### *Management concerns over the management of teleworkers*

The extant literature on teleworking affords limited attention to teleworkers' managers. This is despite managers' reactions being often credited as one of the main factors contributing to the spread and success of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Potter, 2003). For example, a UK study of small and medium-sized enterprises found evidence that managers' attitudes towards teleworking influenced its popularity (Clear and Dickson, 2005). Among the limited studies that focus on managers, a small number have reported managers responding positively towards teleworking (e.g. Watad and DiSanzo, 2000). However, a far greater number have been less positive. For example, Huws et al (1990) discovered that interest in teleworking was only demonstrated by a minority of managers. Potential reasons for this include managers' apprehension regarding teleworking's negative outcomes for their subordinates, (Pilskin, 1998); confusion over how to implement the arrangement (Potter, 2003; Valsecchi, 2006); a belief that teleworking would negatively impact on team working (Baruch, 2001; Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Felstead et al, 2003; Gibson et al, 2002); concern that teleworking could compromise performance and client service (Felstead et al, 2003; Valsecchi, 2006); a failure to recognise advantages through



improved work outcomes due to a lack of interest from competitors or the managers' occupational community (Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010); and a general reluctance to embrace change (Nunes, 2005). Finally, many managers express fears that subordinates' performance cannot be monitored and appropriate appraisals cannot be carried out if they are unable to oversee their employees at work (Felstead et al, 2003; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Watad and Will, 2003).

### *The Problem of Trust*

Manager's lack of trust and their perceived inability to control teleworkers appears to be by far their greatest concern (Felstead et al, 2003; Gibson and Luck, 2004; Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Tomaskovic-Devey and Risman, 1993). Harrington and Ruppel's (1999) survey of Information Systems managers empirically demonstrated that a lack of management trust acts as a barrier to the adoption and diffusion of teleworking and inhibits its growth. Similarly, as trust is said to be 'embedded in interpersonal relations' (Merriman et al, 2007: 8), a reduction in proximate contact between teleworkers and organisationally-based employees may further dissolve trust levels, creating a vicious circle of mistrust. Indeed, Kurland and Cooper (2002) concluded that teleworking restricted teleworkers' membership of intra-organisational networks and limited mentoring relationships, both considered vital conduits for creating inter-employee trust. However, in addition to dwindling levels of trust in teleworking employees by management, teleworkers themselves have reported reduced levels of trust in others. Evidence for this can be found in Merriman et al's (2007) study, which surveyed a heterogeneous sample of 559 virtual and non-virtual employees. They discovered that virtual employees perceived significantly lower levels of supervisory trust and support than conventional employees, which may have a greater effect on demand than supply.

### *Methods of Control*

Studies have described various managerial practices aimed at alleviating these trust and control concerns, which, in turn, seemingly affect teleworking practice. These methods include: employing a piece rate system; specifying strict targets; formalising communication; and the use of various electronic devices (Brocklehurst, 1989; Hamblin,

1995; Kinsman, 1987; Kurland and Egan, 1999; Olson and Primps, 1984). An example of these methods is provided by Valsecchi's (2006) study of an Italian call centre, where electronic messages with a pejorative tone were distributed when sales productivity was unsatisfactory. Additionally, Valsecchi identified three types of management style with regards to teleworking. Firstly, most managers, it was argued, followed a traditional style, relying on their personal knowledge of employees to retain control, or secondly became 'watchmen'. The 'watchman' manager made heavy use of electronic devices with the result that employees were dehumanised and treated as a number. However, Valsecchi also noted that a minority of managers followed a third 'innovative' style and embraced the need for change, realising that observation was no longer effective and instead opting to trust employees. This third style is in keeping with the target-setting, negotiation of outcomes, appropriate communication and trust approaches to control endorsed by many authors (Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Lautsch et al, 2009; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003).

Felstead et al (2003: 242) argue that many of the control methods outlined above, when used in isolation, are an insufficient response to 'deeply engrained' problems. In their qualitative study of professional and clerical teleworkers, their partners and their managers in multiple organisations, Felstead et al (2003: 260) identified a number of methods of surveillance employed by managers, which together form a 'network of managerial control'. These included; 'new surveillance devices,' where new technology was used to monitor employees; activating 'surveillance capable' devices, which involved using existing technology for monitoring purposes, such as time logged into programmes or phone calls; setting short-mid-term targets, which were thought capable of providing a rolling level of productivity; visiting employees in their homes; and finally, emphasising trust as a method of self-regulation by teleworkers. Furthermore, teleworkers' development of a 'team-spirit' and their indoctrination into organisational culture (discussed below) were considered highly important to their effective management by most organisations. These findings indicate that managers' varied approach to managing telework may result from a combination of situational factors which require different forms of management.

## *Communication*

Managers have reportedly been concerned that telework will inhibit or alter communication between employees which may impair performance and the dissemination and perpetuation of organisational culture, discussed below (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Felstead et al, 2003; Van Dyne et al, 2007). In particular, face-to-face contact is thought to be replaced by increased amounts of electronic or computer-mediated communication. This occurs either in real time, such as a phone call or instant messages (synchronous communication) or with a delay between responses such as email or letter (asynchronous communication), both of which potentially change the nature and/or frequency of information sharing (Van Dyne et al, 2007). Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that reduced frequency and increased formalisation of communications accompanies teleworking arrangements (DeSanctis, 1984; Huws et al, 1990; Lallande, 1984; Shirley, 1985). Additionally, in a comprehensive longitudinal study focusing on intra-organisational communication, Duxbury and Neufeld (1999) found the more formalised communication that resulted from teleworking served as a positive improvement. This is reflected in reports from teleworkers and their managers, colleagues and subordinates in that study that hardly any communication problems were encountered.

The evidence is mixed regarding how altered communication actually affects outcomes in practice. Some authors suggest that telework increases employees' number of contacts, facilitates information sharing (Goodrich, 1990; Pool, 1990) enhances worker accessibility, accelerates the speed of decision-making (Coudron, 1992) and improves client communication (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999). Others have found communication to be inhibited by teleworking, which can serve to socially isolate teleworkers, contribute to the breakdown of working relationships, inhibit effective teleworker control and restrict learning opportunities (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003). Still others have found no difference in the frequency or method of communication following teleworking (Neufeld and Fang, 2002). Similarly, Belanger's (1999a) study in a telecommunications organisation found that teleworking did not significantly change the structure of communications between employees. In particular, by analysing 'blocks' of communications Belanger found that individuals' work settings had no impact on who they communicated with. This indicates that teleworkers may not be 'left

out' of communications as others have suggested (e.g. Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999). However, an exclusive focus on work-related communications omits consideration of informal exchanges, which many believe to be just as important for working life and may be more greatly affected by teleworking (i.e. Felstead et al, 2003; Fowler, 1996; Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Kurland and Egan, 1999). Finally, in Duxbury and Neufeld's study, many respondents felt that the continued effectiveness of communication following the commencement of telework resulted from pre-existence of adequate communication channels, a sentiment echoed by Clear and Dickson (2005).

### *Organisational Identification*

Managers have reported fearing that the reduced contact and communication which accompanies telework will lead employees to become independent and 'detach themselves from their workplace' (Valsecchi, 2006: 230). Organisational Identification (OI) refers to employees' feelings of belongingness to their employing organisation and directly relates to organisational culture (discussed below) as it has been shown to affect employees' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours at work (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Indeed evidence suggests that teleworkers' separation from the organisation can cause them to identify more strongly with clients or other teleworkers, which can result in cliques or subcultures forming which are harder to control (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Felstead et al, 2003). However, Wiesenfeld et al (2001) found that teleworkers' OI is dependent on their personal characteristics and perceived work-place social support, indicating that situational factors are pivotal to teleworkers OI.

In a conceptual paper, Thatcher and Zhu (2006) draw on theories of social identity, identity enactment and self-verification to explore potential ways the location of telework, the amount of time spent teleworking and the voluntary or mandatory provision of telework affect teleworkers' OI and associated outcomes. They believe that those who practise full-time telework will face greater challenges to all three aspects of identity. Furthermore, they believe that where telework is voluntary, individuals will see this as a benefit that enhances their OI. Conversely, self-verification and identity enactment will be improved for mandatory teleworkers as they are likely to have more referent others on the same arrangement and will presumably be provided with more guidelines and control measures

to regulate their behaviour. This implies that the type of teleworking arrangement is an important consideration for managers when choosing appropriate communication and work arrangements for teleworkers with respect to teleworkers' OI. It also implies that teleworkers' organisational identification can be managed either by altering the amount of teleworking performed or by imposing different policies for different arrangements.

### *Managers concerns over weakened organisational culture*

Telework has previously been described as a threat to organisational culture (e.g. Hill et al, 2003; Manoochehri and Pinkerton) which, in turn, deters senior and lower level managers' support (Felstead et al, 2003; Gainey et al, 1999). It has been argued that successful telework requires the support of a 'strong' culture, which is characterised by the consistency of norms, beliefs and values within the organisation, (Sathe, 1983) to ensure conformity among employees participating in telework (Felstead et al, 2003; Gainey et al, 1999). Some scholars, and importantly, managers, believe teleworking weakens corporate cultures by reducing interactions and communication (Clancy, 1994; Raghuram et al, 2003; Sathe, 1983; Shamir and Salomon, 1985). One explanation is that when new employees are recruited onto teleworking arrangements their physical separation prevents these employees from being adequately socialised into the organisation and from internalising norms (Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003).

It has also been argued that by contributing to a breakdown in relationships and reducing the quality and quantity of communication, teleworking prevents the transmission and reinforcement of shared norms and values between existing organisational members (Gainey et al, 1999; Harrington and Santiago, 2006). A reported outcome of weakened cultures is the loss of an effective tool for regulating employees' behaviour through 'clan control' (Kurland and Cooper, 2002: 109) and reduced organisational identification for employees (Thatcher and Zhu, 2006). More positively, some authors have considered whether allowing employees flexibility and autonomy through teleworking can improve an organisation's overall culture as employees embrace these outcomes and become more committed and productive (Dutton et al, 1994). However, more work needs to be done to understand the effect of different organisational environments on the prevalence and

practice of telework as managers have been shown to consider culture the biggest barrier to telework (Wataad and Will, 2003).

### *Section summary*

The evidence suggests that despite teleworkers' and managers' recognition of the potential for significant gains in productivity, recruitment, retention, turnover and absence, management are still seemingly reluctant to permit teleworking arrangements for employees. Furthermore, rather surprisingly when considering the acknowledged productivity gains, managers often appear to lack sufficient levels of trust in employees to embrace telework. Even where low trust does not restrict the supply of telework, it may affect its practice in differential ways, depending on managers' chosen methods of control. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that fears relating to teleworkers' reduced OI and weakened organisational culture may be unfounded or resolved through a greater understanding of how teleworks fits within an organisation's environment and its careful management. However, managers' concerns regarding organisational culture and their predominantly unfavourable perceptions of telework seemingly remain and continue to affect the supply and practice of this working method, regardless of the actual outcomes. Consequently, consideration of when and why managers remain sceptical of telework is essential to understanding its supply.

### **3.2.2 Group and social factors**

#### *The management of non-teleworkers*

There have been references in the literature to managers with teleworking subordinates being forced to deal with the unfavourable opinions of on-site workers (Felstead et al, 2003; Lautsch et al, 2009). These references indicate friction in relationships between managers and their office-based subordinates as a result of teleworking. The evidence suggests that unrest among onsite workers may arise from changes to their own working practices and environment following a teleworking arrangement. More specifically, those who remain in the office may face disruption in team working and fragmented social networks (Bailey and Kurland, 1999; Van Dyne et al, 2007). Additionally, studies have

described office-based workers' frustration with teleworking colleagues for over-burdening them with peripheral tasks (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Felstead et al, 2003; Golden, 2006; Lautsch et al, 2009; Nord, 2002).

Recent research suggests that the impact of teleworking on office-based employees may have an important influence, not only on their behaviour toward teleworkers but also on their work attitudes and organisational behaviour (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). In a conceptual paper, Van Dyne et al (2007) describe how when some members of a work team telework it can alter the functioning and dynamics of the whole group. In particular, reduced face-time and increased asynchronous communication can lead to misunderstandings, uncertainty and co-ordination issues which, coupled with potential resentment from those not able to work flexibly, can also decrease group motivation and negatively affect performance. Additionally, in a rare empirical study focusing on responses from teleworkers' on-site colleagues, Golden (2007) found that where teleworking was more prevalent, non-teleworkers reported less satisfaction with colleagues and higher intentions to quit. However, Golden found that where greater levels of face-to-face interaction between teleworkers and non-teleworkers occurred and where non-teleworkers worked in jobs that afforded higher levels of autonomy, the negative impact of teleworking on non-teleworker satisfaction was reduced. Van Dyne et al (2007) suggest managers' approach to telework contributes to non-teleworkers' perceptions and behaviours through encouraging appropriate behaviours. However, this research is theoretical and additional evidence is required. In general, responses from non-teleworkers have been notably absent in studies of telework (Golden, 2007) and insufficient consideration has been afforded to non-teleworkers' influence on the practice of telework and the influence of managers' on non-teleworkers' perceptions.

### *Section summary*

The evidence suggests that managers may be justified in their concerns over the management of on-site workers in a telework context as teleworkers' peers have reported negative outcomes and negative perceptions towards teleworkers. Furthermore it appears, in some circumstances, that telework may affect on-site workers' work attitudes and behaviours towards the organisation. However, little is known about the circumstances in

which these perceptions and behaviours arise. Further attention needs to be paid to non-teleworkers' involvement in the practice of telework and managers' influence on their perceptions of the practice.

### **3.2.3 Employee selection**

#### *Identifying Appropriate Employees*

Several authors have considered the traits and skills that management should look for in potential teleworkers in order for them to work effectively away from the workplace. Regarding appropriate character traits, people with a high need for certainty, structure and feedback are thought to be unsuited to teleworking (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997), as are employees with a tendency towards workaholism or loneliness (Shin, 2004). Many authors suggest suitable individuals should exude positive self-management behaviours such as self-directed behaviour, self-discipline, dependability and proficiency at independent working (Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Valsecchi, 2006; Watad and Will, 2003). Renn et al (2005) believe these behaviours determine individuals' propensity to procrastinate; assess themselves accurately; be able to defer gratification; externalise failure and internalise success; be emotionally self-involved; and enact persistence in achieving success. Furthermore, Renn et al (2005) propose that an individual's propensity to perform positive or self-defeating behaviours, defined as 'deliberate or unintentional acts that have counterproductive effects on oneself or one's own project' (Renn et al, 2005: 660) or self-management behaviours (outlined above) are affected by their personality type. Drawing on the 'Big-Five' model of personality they suggest that high levels of conscientiousness and self-esteem (except where this leads to inaccurate, and particularly inflated self-assessment) and an internal locus of control will be positively related to desirable self-management behaviours and negatively related to self-defeating behaviours. Additionally, Renn et al argue that low levels of neuroticism and generalised self-efficacy will also have a positive effect on an individual's self-management. Consequently, it is suggested that management should identify these traits when looking to supply teleworking to particular staff members.

In a related study, Raghuram et al (2003) empirically tested the effect of self-efficacy, defined as 'one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to



manage prospective situations' (Bandura, 1997: 2) on employees' adjustment to telework. Raghuram, et al's survey of 756 employees, in a multinational telecommunications organisation, found that employees with higher levels of self-efficacy were better at adjusting to a teleworking arrangement, structuring their behaviour, and motivating themselves through setting goals than those with low self-efficacy. Additionally, they found that employees who teleworked more frequently benefitted more from higher self-efficacy. Their explanation was that in a traditional office setting, employees receive assistance and motivation from proximate colleagues, whereas in the home the absence of these aspects makes structuring work more challenging. Consequently, those with greater self-efficacy are more able to anticipate outcomes causing them to expend greater effort and organise their behaviour in a beneficial manner. This would suggest that in these circumstances, employers should allow extensive teleworking for certain employees and not for others.

Alternatively, Workman et al (2003) found that individual's 'cognitive styles' predicted employees' suitability to telework and/or work in virtual teams. In particular, employees with internal, liberal and global cognitive styles which relate to individuals preferring to work alone in unstructured, ambiguous situations were more committed to teleworking. However, they argued that these styles produced less commitment to virtual team working. Alternatively, those with external, conservative, local cognitive styles, who liked working with others in clear, structured situations, were less committed to teleworking, but more committed to virtual team working. Consequently, individuals with diverse cognitive styles may be difficult to manage in virtual teams, suggesting that employees successful at team working may be unsuitable for teleworking and therefore the supply of telework in team environments should be restricted. However, such observations are contrary to the evidence that telework is prevalent in teams (Watad and Will, 2003).

Shin (2004), like Workman et al, believes that an individual's perceived fit with their co-workers and their job is more important than their fit with the organisation. However, Shin also argues that the relationship between personality factors and success in virtual work is more complex, involving a mix of personal attributes and skills desirable for employees working in situations with varying degrees of virtuality. According to Shin, teleworking is high on organisational, spatial and temporal dispersion and therefore is most suited to

employees who appreciate flexibility and autonomy. Additionally, the higher an individual's willingness to trust, trustworthiness, lateral skills (i.e. collaborative and interpersonal skills) and virtual communication skills (i.e. ensuring clarity of communication), the more they are suited to working in virtual teams within highly virtual organisations. The outcomes of achieving a correct Person-Environment Fit, according to Shin, are increased performance, satisfaction and commitment, and decreased turnover. Overall it appears difficult to determine the required personal characteristics for conducting successful telework, as these may depend on the arrangement in question. For others, the nature of an individual's job and more specifically perceptions regarding the appropriateness of jobs for telework from the perspective of employers is thought to be the most important factor in determining the supply of teleworking (Peters et al, 2004). This issue will now be discussed in more detail.

### *Identifying Appropriate Jobs*

There is consensus that even where an individual's personality type and skills are conducive to telework their job role or some aspects of it may not be. Indeed, managers have reported that the content of an employee's job is the most important consideration in the supply and practice of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Daniels et al (2001: 1162) consider that the 'upper limit on teleworkers within an organisation will be equal to the number of suitable jobs for telework'. However, which jobs are most suited to telework is disputed in the literature. Authors have specified numerous jobs and attributes of jobs deemed suitable for telework. These include: autonomous jobs which require limited interaction (Belanger, 1999b; Messersmith, 2007); jobs which produce discrete, measurable outputs (Upton, 1984); roles which have high task independence and job discretion (Golden and Veiga, 2005); or jobs that require complex tasks that benefit from few distractions (Belanger, 1999b; Duxbury et al, 1996). Jobs deemed unsuitable are those which require proximate physical resources (Watad and Will, 2003); those where face-to-face interaction is necessary at regular times (Upton, 1984); and those where 'intensive interaction' is required with either colleagues or clients (Watad and Will, 2003).

Conventional wisdom was that lower-skilled employees with clearly visible job specifications and/or the capacity for automation would be best suited to telework, as control of these workers would be more easily achieved (Brocklehurst, 1989). More

recently, teleworking has been considered most suitable for professional and managerial jobs where occupants have previously demonstrated trustworthiness and have higher job involvement and intrinsic motivation (Kossek et al, 2006). However, Shamir and Salomon (1985) suggest that professional jobs have higher role ambiguity and that the reduced feedback opportunities and limited communication which accompany telework may be more stressful than in lower-level jobs with clearly specified tasks. This, they believe, is even more apparent where high skilled occupants perform boundary roles such as client facing jobs. Others have suggested that consulting, sales and marketing roles are particularly suited to teleworking (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Mills et al, 2001), all of which involve 'client facing' aspects.

Following her study of secretarial and clerical employees, Hamblin (1995) suggests that data entry jobs are unsuited to telework. This contradicts other research, which describes data entry as particularly suited to a teleworking arrangement (Fritz et al, 1996; Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996). Furthermore, in Hamblin's study, respondents perceived secretarial jobs, such as word-processing and audio typing, and jobs with limited clerical or administrative responsibilities to be suitable for teleworking. However, others have found that there is a low incidence of telework among these roles (Ruiz and Walling, 2005). Finally, although most scholars agree that jobs which require high levels of interaction and team-working are unsuitable for teleworking, teleworking often seems to take place within teams and among those with interdependent tasks (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004; Watad and Will, 2003). Indeed, Felstead et al (2002) found that teleworking is significantly more likely to be available to non-managerial staff in organisations that engage in higher levels of team working. Furthermore, Duxbury and Neufeld (1999) reported that 43% of teleworkers worked in teams and the majority adapted to their arrangement without having to change the nature of their job.

More recently, what Drucker (1999) described as 'knowledge workers', defined as 'highly skilled employees whose works are complex, cyclical in nature and involve processing information to make decisions' (Martinez-Sanchez et al, 2007: 213), have been considered most suited to telework (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Martinez-Sanchez et al, 2007). However, the term 'knowledge worker' applies to a great many job roles in the modern workforce (Reinhardt et al, 2011). Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the diffusion and

practice of telework varies within the area of ‘knowledge work’ (Ruiz and Walling, 2005). Finally, telework continues to be performed by employees who are not engaged in knowledge work. Taking account of more specific aspects of job roles alongside the context in which telework is supplied thus appears necessary when seeking to understand the reasons for the differential uptake and practice of telework among employees.

### *Section summary*

It appears that employees’ personality types may play a part in influencing their suitability for teleworking in the eyes of managers. In particular, it has been argued that there should be a good ‘Person-Environment Fit’, which describes the similarity or convergence between a particular set of person-related attributes (i.e. values) and a set of environment-related attributes (i.e. organisational culture) (Shin: 727). However, details of which environments suit which personalities remain unclear. Regardless of an employees’ personality, it seems their job role may be more important for acquiring telework, though disagreement over what constitutes a suitable job role is apparent. The lack of consensus and even contradictory evidence surrounding the suitability of jobs for telework indicates that a mixture of diverse contextual factors determine employees’ actual or perceived suitability for telework from the perspective of managers.

### **3.2.4 Contextual factors**

#### *Organisational Industry and Culture*

There has been limited attention in the literature to both the suitability and practice of teleworking within different industry contexts. Telework it is not felt to be equally suited to all industries (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004) and has been described as particularly suited to the service and technology sectors (Havyatt et al 2010; Urze, 2005; Siha and Monroe, 2006). However, Urze (2005) contends that it is becoming appropriate within more traditional sectors following the decentralisation and globalisation of organisations. It is argued that globalisation and decentralisation changes the nature of jobs which become more focused on processing, storage and managing information (Cooper, 2006) and therefore more amenable to telework (Urze, 2005). Consequently, the nature of job roles

within a given industry is felt to strongly influence the suitability of telework within that industry (Daniels et al, 2001; Havyatt et al, 2010; Perez, 2002). However, 'teleworkable' jobs are evident across sectors (Clear and Dickson, 2005), while the adoption of telework differs widely between them (Ruiz and Walling, 2005). For example, 'professional' and 'white-collar' jobs which are argued to be suited to telework are prevalent within both public and private organisations in diverse industry contexts (LFS, 2007). However, the numbers of teleworkers within these sectors varies considerably (Welz and Wolf, 2010; WERS, 2004). Gaining a better understanding of the suitability of particular job roles to telework may shed light on the differential practice of telework within different industry and organisational contexts and vice versa.

There has been some, albeit limited, research which considers the influence of different organisational cultures on the practice of telework (Kossek et al, 2006). Gainey et al (1999) have presented a conceptual model which suggests that different cultures, which are influenced by an organisation's industry or strategy, will have varying levels of teleworking suitability. More specifically, they argue that where organisations rely on daily interactions, as in some consulting or research and development firms, or are small with centralised leadership; such as family firms, their cultures will be unsuited to telework. Alternatively, in firms characterised by self-reliance and individualism, such as professional partnerships, teleworking is considered ideal. Additionally, Gainey et al believe teleworking to be appropriate for firms with formal bureaucratic rules and procedures, such as government organisations.

Contrary to Gainey et al's model, Harrington and Ruppel (1999) found that hierarchical organisations, which operate along the lines of a traditional bureaucracy where processes and rules act as a substitute for trust, appeared to be less suitable for sustained teleworking. However, they did find that hierarchical organisations with rational cultures were suitable for developing the levels of trust required for the successful adoption of telework. In particular they found a relationship between a rational culture, where objectives are set and rewards are administered accordingly, and managers building high levels of trust in employees, which in turn was linked to a greater adoption and diffusion of telework. These findings were reflected in Harrington and Santiago (2006) who found that telework was more likely to be adopted in subunits of an organisation that were rational rather than

hierarchical, but that once adopted, pervasive hierarchical values may protect employees from negative outcomes. Furthermore, group cultures built on sharing and human resource management practices which emphasise open communication and employee participation appeared ideal and even essential for the continued diffusion of telework, and correlated highly with measures of teleworking success. Interestingly, the study also suggested that different conditions were desirable at different stages of a teleworking initiative. In particular, at the adoption stage, uptake is most likely in a rational culture where a compelling business case of the comparative advantages of teleworking and its compatibility with existing business practices could be demonstrated. Following this, the presence of human resource practices which support a group culture was most likely to determine the continued success of a teleworking arrangement.

Further evidence which contradicts Gainey et al's model is presented by Clear and Dickson (2005). They discovered that organisations with flat organisational hierarchies, which emphasised results evaluation and the promotion of autonomy, were more likely to support teleworking than organisations characterised by a 'physicality of activity' (Clear and Dickson 2005: 230). Importantly, this describes not only manufacturing and operational organisations but also knowledge-intensive firms when their work is carried out in a physically proximate manner. An example would be professional partnerships, such as law firms, which are deemed suitable for teleworking by Gainey et al (1999). Additionally, Clear and Dickson found that new, knowledge-intensive, technically-driven organisations incorporated after 1994 were more likely to support teleworking for all employees, whereas older organisations mainly provided support to managers and professionals. A further discovery of interest was that 'key workers,' who are described as non-senior employees with an element of bargaining power, were accommodated under teleworking arrangements by both cultures. This implies, again, that aspects of an employee's job may transcend cultural suitability with regard to the supply of telework. However, the complex influence of the organisational environment on the way telework is practised and the related potential for differing experiences and outcomes for employees within differing environments needs to be acknowledged.

### *The availability and utilisation of Appropriate Technology*

Advances in technology have been pivotal to the development of teleworking and are likely to continue to shape the supply, function, purpose and performance of it in the future (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996; Kaufman-Scarborough, 2006; Pearce, 2009). Indeed, many authors emphasised the provision of an adequate technological infrastructure so that teleworkers have sufficient resources to perform their work (Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Pearce, 2009; Perez, 2002). Appropriate technology includes phones, audio-conferencing, computers with high bandwidth and secure/private network connections, thin client technology (where applications are not stored on a computer but on a dedicated server to give organisations more control over the location of processing) e-mail, instant messaging (IM), groupware, videoconferencing and online conferencing, to name a few (Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Pearce, 2009; Watad and Will, 2003). Pearce (2009) believes that these different technological tools are used in three important ways: connectivity, allowing contact and access to the internet and the organisation's network (i.e. internet connections and networks); information sharing, where individuals with shared interests or work teams can access information (in its simplest form this can be achieved via email or in a more technologically advanced way through a shared web space such as a portal); and communication, in particular synchronous (real time) communication is emphasised by Pearce (such as IM and audio and online conferencing).

Despite studies reporting technological obstacles to teleworking (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Simpson, 2003; Valsecchi, 2006), used correctly, technology can reportedly assist managers in overcoming some common problems (Pearce, 2009). For example Wellman et al (1996: 228) suggest that remote workers may actually have more scope for communication, social contact and support if they use the internet to turn 'dispersed workers into highly cohesive groups'. Furthermore, Golden et al (2008) discovered that communication enhancing technology reduced the negative impact of professional isolation on job performance. However, though the importance of technology is widely accepted, others warn that teleworking arrangements should not be driven by it as teleworking is a social construction, which necessitates appropriate technology for the task at hand (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Fowler, 1996). In particular, Watad and DiSanzo (2000) demonstrate this in their empirical study of a successful teleworking arrangement. They emphasise that success was achieved

as a result of a comprehensive and reliable IT infrastructure but only alongside top management support, comprehensive training, the swift rectification of interpersonal problems and positive communication about the benefits of teleworking to employees.

### *Appropriate Policies, Practices and Behaviours*

Finally, the supply and implementation of telework may be affected by the choice and presence of particular policies and practices which surround the arrangement. A number of commentators offer practical ‘best practice’ advice to managers regarding the implementation and management of teleworking arrangements aimed at avoiding the issues and capitalising on the possible benefits of telework discussed. For example, practicalities that employers are advised to consider before embarking on a teleworking arrangement include ensuring the suitability of an individual’s proposed workplace. In particular, employees are often required to have a separate room or area for telework which needs to be free from distractions and which adheres to health and safety requirements (Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003). Further considerations are legal obligations; specifications about equipment use; health and safety obligations; and privacy issues (Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003). Additionally, many authors emphasise the need for ‘appropriate’ selection criteria (Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Rothwell, 1997). To avoid the deterioration of communication Kurland and Bailey (1999) recommend a number of measures, including clear guidelines on communication and scheduling. Lautsch and Kossek (2011) and Lautsch et al (2009) suggest using communication methods, which promote information sharing, and applying the same management and monitoring processes as for the conventional workforce. Alternatively, Fogarty et al (2011) suggest practices may need to differ between teleworkers and non-teleworkers to maintain effective contact and communication between employees.

Frolick (1993) believes managers should receive training to ensure they can manage by objectives. However, Potter (2003) believes that to adequately manage teleworking employees, managers actually require specific traits rather than training, though Potter stopped short of identifying these traits. Managers’ requirement to adopt best practice policies and practices may also have an impact on both the supply and management of telework. However, there is little information regarding the content of best practice policies



other than suggestions that they should be ‘appropriate’. An exception is provided by Martinez-Sanchez et al (2007) who believe that implementing developmental HR practices may facilitate the adoption of telework by helping to improve employees’ self-efficacy and managers’ trust. However, they stop short of describing how and whether these outcomes can be achieved within diverse environments.

Illegems and Verbeke (2004) take a less prescriptive stance and argue that an organisation’s competencies are supported by policies which will be more or less supportive of telework. Those organisations which rely on more traditional HRM practices to support face to face contact will be less successful at implementing telework. More successful organisations at adopting telework will be those where the broader HRM policies adapt to telework in a manner which prevents employees from fearing that telework will lead to negative outcomes, discussed below. However, while some authors believe that outcome-based reward can ensure appropriate rewards are received and will improve employees’ perceptions of fairness (Fogarty et al, 2011; Mahler, 2012) others believe output controls alone are insufficient to manage telework (Felstead et al, 2003; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Kurland and Egan, 1999)

### *Section summary*

The potential for organisational factors to influence the supply, management and consequently employees’ experiences of telework is undisputed, but there is disagreement over how and in what circumstances differences will occur. In particular, it may be that telework is more suited to different types of organisation at different stages. There is more agreement over what constitutes a suitable working environment for teleworkers and, more specifically, that this should be free from distractions and that appropriate technology is required. Finally, the approach taken towards telework by management, such as teleworker selection criteria, will inevitably lead to differences in supply. What is less clear is how different approaches to the supply and management of telework will lead to different outcomes for teleworkers and in what circumstances different approaches are considered appropriate.

### **3.2.5 Research considerations regarding the supply of telework**

Research on the supply of telework is recognised to be limited (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Martinez-Sanchez et al, 2007). In order to understand how telework is practised within organisations, it is necessary to achieve greater clarity over the factors which influence organisations' and managers' propensity to supply telework and the manner in which they do so. A recurring observation in the literature is the propensity of researchers to focus on teleworkers, preventing a deeper understanding of the broader issues surrounding telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Felstead et al, 2003; Fogarty et al, 2011; Golden, 2006b; 2007; Lautsch et al, 2009) which, in turn, may affect its supply. In particular, authors emphasise the value of acquiring more data at the individual, group and organisation level, as the consequences of telework may vary between them (Belanger and Collins, 1998; Ellison, 1999; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). More specifically, it has been suggested that researchers would benefit from collecting data from non-teleworking employees, such as peers, managers and potential other stakeholders regarding their experiences and perceptions of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Golden, 2006b; Lautsch et al, 2009). In particular, scholars have lamented a dearth of qualitative evidence exploring the experiences and perceptions of teleworkers' office-based colleagues; a factor which seriously inhibits the interpretation of many of the findings presented in this chapter (Lautsch et al, 2009).

A second, related consideration involves the definition and conceptualisation of teleworkers and office-based employees. First, teleworkers seem to be portrayed in the literature as subordinate employees who are answerable to anxious managers and potentially problematic to overburdened peers (e.g. - Felstead et al, 2003; Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Van Dyne et al, 2007). However, this portrayal is contrary to the data provided by LFS (2005) which presents teleworkers as professional, managerial and often senior managerial employees who are therefore likely to supervise subordinates. In order to understand the true impact of teleworking on workplace relationships we therefore need to expand samples beyond teleworkers, their managers and their peers to include teleworkers' subordinates. In this regard, Duxbury and Neufeld's (1999) suggested conducting an investigation into the impact of teleworking on the subordinates of teleworking managers. Golden and Veiga (2008) have started in this direction and revealed

that the quality of subordinates' relationships with teleworking managers is related to their attitudes and outcomes. However, their study was limited to a single organisation and by their own admission, the quantitative research design makes causality difficult to determine. It is clear that there is a great deal of scope and indeed a recognised need for more extensive investigation into the effect of teleworking on peer and non-peer relationships (Golden, 2007; Golden and Veiga, 2008).

### **3.2.6 Conclusions relating to the supply of telework**

The evidence relating to the supply of telework from the perspective of managers and organisations indicates that there are many benefits of telework. However, a number of concerns are also evident, with respect to the trust and control of teleworkers, weakened organisational culture, teleworkers organisational identity and non-teleworkers' resistance. A clear concern for organisations relates to managers' and non-teleworkers' unfavourable perceptions of telework if their resultant behaviour towards teleworkers restricts the provision and facilitation of telework. Regarding managers' perception, there appears to be agreement that telework is suited to some employees and, in particular, some job types more than others, but there is considerable disagreement over what these job types are. What is clear is that, in addition to the work undertaken by teleworkers, elements of the industry and organisational context are likely to affect organisation's propensity to supply telework.

### **3.3 Employees' demand for telework**

In Chapter 2, the benefits of telework for employees were outlined. However, it was also recognised that telework may result in drawbacks for employees, potentially preventing them from participating in telework where it is provided on a voluntary basis. Employees' demand for telework is recognised to be influenced by their expected outcomes of participating in telework (Bailyn, 1989; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). In some cases teleworkers who experience undesirable outcomes may abstain from voluntary teleworking in the future. Consequently, in order to understand the uptake of telework, this section considers the evidence regarding teleworkers' motivations for and experiences of

teleworking. As the outcomes of teleworking have been argued to be influenced by employees' individual characteristics and personal circumstances, these factors are also considered.

### **3.3.1 Employees' experiences of telework**

#### *Satisfaction*

Employees may logically choose a working method which optimises their level of satisfaction. If telework fails to contribute to employees' satisfaction there is little incentive to participate in it in the absence of constraining factors. Numerous studies have investigated teleworkers' perceptions of satisfaction, including their satisfaction with their job (e.g. Durbin, 1991); the arrangement itself (e.g. Ramsower, 1985); their workplace relationships (e.g. Golden, 2007); and their overall life (e.g. Vitterso et al, 2004). However, in general, research in this area has produced mixed evidence (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Some studies have reported greater satisfaction among teleworkers and have credited this to decreased stress (Guimaraes and Dallow, 1999), teleworkers' greater control over their working methods and environment (Kossek et al, 2006) and fewer disruptions (Durbin, 1991). Conversely, others argue that satisfaction can be negatively affected if teleworkers feel they are 'outside the firm' (Haddon and Lewis, 1994: 201) while still other studies have detected no difference in the satisfaction reported between teleworkers and non-teleworkers (Belanger, 1999b).

In an attempt to rectify the inconsistencies in these findings scholars have begun to consider other underlying factors. Konradt et al (2003) discovered that non-job-related stressors, such as family pressures and the perceived quality of management by objectives (MBO) were significant predictors of stress and job satisfaction levels for frequent teleworkers. However, interestingly, both infrequent teleworkers and non-teleworkers experienced greater task-related stress and perceived the same quality of MBO as frequent teleworkers. This indicates that both arrangements ultimately produce similar levels of stress and satisfaction but that these were derived from different sources. Collins (2005) discovered that an important determinant of satisfaction with regards to teleworking is employees' perception that they have choice over whether they can telework. Finally, Golden and Veiga

(2005) found that the extent of teleworking has a curvilinear relationship with job satisfaction in the shape of an inverted U. Here levels of satisfaction initially increase at low levels of teleworking but plateau and start to decrease at higher levels.

### *Well-being*

The evidence relating to teleworkers' experiences of satisfaction implies a close relationship between their satisfaction levels and their perceptions of well-being (Konradt et al, 2003). It is perhaps unsurprising in this case that, as with satisfaction, the evidence regarding teleworkers' well-being has also been inconclusive. Some studies have found that teleworking may improve employees' well-being by reducing emotional and mental strain (Golden, 2006a) and in some cases may reduce depression (Kossek et al, 2006). Additionally, reducing office interruptions and travel time to meet work demands has been consistently provided as a reason for opting to telework by employees as this seemingly helps to reduce stress levels and improves their quality of life (Golden, 2006a; Manoochehri and Pinkerton, 2003; Peters et al, 2004). However, other evidence has been less encouraging. For example, in a two-stage mixed methods study of journalists, Mann and Holdsworth (2003) discovered that teleworkers (who teleworked at least three days per week) had more negative emotional experiences than their office-based counterparts. They found evidence that teleworking may be related to psychological ill health and that it lowered teleworkers' general well-being. In particular, teleworkers were more likely to experience loneliness, irritability, worry and guilt, and to have more physical symptoms of stress than non-teleworking employees.

### *Work-family Balance*

Improved work-family balance, and in particular the ability to balance work and family demands and strengthen domestic relationships, is considered one of the main benefits of teleworking and a major source of improved satisfaction and well-being for teleworkers (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Duxbury et al, 1996; Felstead et al, 2002; Golden, 2006b; Hill et al, 2003; Neufeld and Fang, 2005; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). In reality, when employees conduct paid work in the home the social and psychological borders, which separate the spheres of peoples' lives, may be more easily penetrated (Clark, 2000, Kossek et al 2006).

The result is either positive or negative ‘spillover’ between teleworkers’ work and non-work domains. Spillover occurs where aspects of work or non-work cross ‘physical, mental, behavioural or temporal boundaries’ (Kossek et al, 2006: 364), with the desirability of such ‘border crossing’ stimulating debate. For example, some scholars believe integrating roles helps individuals to better balance their lives (Friedman et al, 1998), whereas others indicate that employees who favour ‘segmentation strategies’ and act to keep work distinct from their domestic lives have higher well-being (Kossek et al, 2006; Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Lautsch et al 2009, ).

Evidently, despite the extensive literature, research in this area remains inconclusive. On the one hand, teleworking may improve family life through enabling the effective allocation of resources and reducing exhaustion (Golden, 2006a), increasing family time (Nilles, 1994) and improving relationships with children and other family members (Golden, 2006b; Olson and Primps, 1984). For instance, Duxbury et al (1996) found that teleworking enabled employees to increase their productivity without suffering negative consequences in their family domain. Yet, on the other hand, teleworking may encroach on a teleworker’s domestic world through the unsocial hours of working (Huws, 1984), increased role overload and stress (Duxbury et al, 1996) and overwork (Bailyn, 1989; Dimitrova, 2003; Hill et al, 1996; Mann et al, 2000; Sullivan, 2001).

Golden et al (2006b) attempted to rectify these inconsistent findings by adopting a bidirectional focus while examining the extent of telework on work-family and family-work conflict. The survey used a sample of 454 professional-level employees who split their working time between home and the office. Their conclusions support a ‘depletion’ hypothesis (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000) where extensive teleworking reduced work’s interference with family, but conversely increased family interference with work. Additionally, different levels of autonomy and work flexibility along with household size moderated these effects. For example those with more autonomy and work flexibility experienced less work-family conflict while those with bigger households experienced more family to work conflict.

Kaufman-Scarborough (2006) takes a contingent perspective and considers the notion of ‘fit’. She suggests that the development and use of new technologies for conducting work

tasks and communications can alter the work practices of individuals along with the way they experience work in the domestic environment. In a theoretical paper, she considers how these technologies, particularly within the home, interact with actors' conceptualisations and experiences of time and space. She posits that there must be congruence between an individual's 'time personality' (the way they perceive and utilise time in the different domains) and the location of the working environment within the home (i.e. whether there is a separate office, dedicated space near a functional area such as the kitchen or whether tasks can be fully integrated with shared space). Kaufman-Scarborough presented a matrix displaying three 'styles' of non-work (i.e. domestic chores) and work at home environment; 'monochronic', where tasks are performed in a separated, linear fashion and not merged; 'dovetailed', where tasks are performed in a linear but overlapping way where the next task is commenced before the previous one is completed; and 'polychronic', where multiple tasks are performed simultaneously. The greater similarity between the styles of home non-work and work tasks, she proposes, the easier it will be to achieve work and personal goals within the home. This analysis suggests that individuals' propensity to opt for teleworking in an attempt to balance their work and family lives, as well as the way they practise telework, is likely to be influenced heavily by personal and environmental factors and aspects of their job, discussed below.

### *Professional Isolation*

Research findings have indicated that performing telework can result in 'professional isolation,' (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Golden et al, 2008; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). Teleworking employees have been shown to experience comparatively limited opportunities for promotions, reduced opportunities for the acquisition of desirable projects, and payment inequity (Christensen, 1987; Harrington and Santiago, 2006; Khalifa and Davidson, 2000; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). This is in spite of strong evidence that teleworkers believe working away from the office improves their productivity and performance (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Additionally, studies suggest that teleworkers may also suffer impairments to their development (Bailyn, 1989) which results in a 'fear of isolation'. For example, seven in ten respondents to a survey conducted by the UK Department of Trade and Industry believed that working from home would damage their career prospects (Stevens et al, 2004).

Conversely, some studies have found no negative effects from professional isolation among teleworkers (Belanger, 1999b; Frolick, 1993). Indeed, more positively, teleworkers may actually receive more favourable arrangements than non-teleworkers. For example, Haddon and Brynin's (2005) study spanning six countries discovered that teleworkers were actually more highly paid than non-teleworkers. They speculate that employers may be either rewarding higher actual or perceived productivity or that having a high paid job may be a prerequisite for telework. Additionally, there may be instances where teleworking contributes to skill enhancement for both teleworking and non-teleworking employees, particularly when it encourages them to develop communication, organisational and technological skills (Hamilton, 1987; Watad and DiSanzo, 2000). However, others have suggested that teleworking may lead to 'up-skilling' or 'de-skilling' for those who participate in it, but the circumstances in which these occur are somewhat unclear (Fulton, 1997).

Regarding the industry context, Cooper and Kurland (2002) suggest that organisational ownership may have an effect on actual or anticipated professional isolation. For example public sector organisations place comparatively less value on these 'informal' developmental practices and their employees, though still experiencing some professional isolation, are partially shielded from it by formal structures. Offering a contingency perspective, Golden et al (2008) investigated the amount of time employees spent teleworking, the amount of face-to-face interaction teleworkers have with others, and their level of access to communication-enhancing technologies. They sought to investigate the impact of these factors on teleworkers' perceived level of professional isolation, performance and turnover outcomes. They discovered that perceived professional isolation was correlated significantly with lower performance as expected, but surprisingly it also appeared to significantly reduce teleworkers' intention to turnover. Additionally, they found that a higher incidence of teleworking was correlated negatively with both performance and turnover intentions and that greater face-to-face interaction and access to communication enhancing technologies was positively correlated with these outcomes. A final surprising finding was that increased face-to-face interaction was not associated with reduced perceptions of professional isolation for teleworking employees. However, due to the



quantitative research design, explanations for these findings are not clear and therefore require further investigation.

Overall, it appears that a number of complex factors may contribute to whether and how employees experience professional isolation. However, in spite of its cause, a fear of isolation has been shown to inhibit employees' uptake of teleworking arrangements and/or affect the way telework is carried out (Kurland and Cooper, 2002). The factors which lead to a fear of isolation require further investigation.

### *Social Isolation*

In addition to the potential for negative outcomes in the professional arena, many authors have documented a decrease in human interaction as a result of teleworking (Ellison, 1999; Fritz et al, 1996; Raghuram, 1996), which can result in social isolation. Indeed, Huws (1984), in a pioneering survey of 78 UK teleworkers, revealed that social isolation was the biggest problem associated with telework. This is reflected in a number of studies (e.g. Konradt et al, 1999; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; Mann et al, 2000). Additionally, Haddon and Lewis (1994) suggest that reduced contact with work colleagues may have more far-reaching consequences, as face-to-face contact enables individuals to form personal friendships, and potentially to meet their spouse (Shamir and Salomon, 1985). For these reasons, Haddon and Lewis (1994) posit that social isolation may be more of a concern for younger employees who are more likely to be looking for relationships and/or for those who live alone and therefore experience the majority of their social interaction at work (Huws, 1984). However, although Belanger (1999b) found that the need to socialise with colleagues was a significant factor in preventing people from teleworking, age was not found to be significant in his study.

Alternatively, some studies suggest that teleworking may improve perceptions of isolation among employees where personal circumstances, such as a disability, looking after young children or living in remote areas, have previously prevented them from working or experiencing social contact (Crossman and Burton, 1993; Hamblin, 1995). For example, in a study of government teleworkers in rural Australia, Simpson (2003) found that teleworking improved perceptions of isolation in some cases by allowing those in remote

areas to participate in work. Less attention has been afforded to whether, when and how social isolation affects employees demand for telework in comparison with professional isolation.

### *Workplace Relationships*

Evidence that teleworking contributes to a breakdown of colleague relationships exists in several studies. For example, teleworkers have reported perceiving that they lack authority in dealing with on-site workers, that they feel viewed as ‘part-timers’ and ‘outsiders’ and that they are considered ‘lazy’ by those in the organisation (Haddon and Lewis, 1994, Lautsch et al, 2009). Additionally Duxbury and Neufeld (1999) described how teleworkers believed co-workers viewed their work as illegitimate, were jealous of their ‘privilege’ and tried to make them feel guilty for their ‘absence’.

However, much of this evidence relating to teleworkers and their workplace relationships is anecdotal and, in general, workplace relationships have been largely neglected in the teleworking literature (Lautsch et al, 2009). Neufeld and Fang (1999) first touched on the importance of teleworkers’ workplace relationships in their quantitative and qualitative investigation of two Canadian organisations. They discovered that productivity was determined not only by the beliefs and attitudes of teleworkers regarding their satisfaction with teleworking but also by their interaction with managers and family members. Furthermore, satisfaction with the teleworking arrangement was determined by perceived social interactions with managers, colleagues and family members. Significantly, those teleworkers who perceived that their social interactions with these groups had been negatively affected by teleworking were more likely to be dissatisfied and to perceive lower productivity.

Golden (2006b) conducted the first thorough investigation of workplace relationships in a study of full-time teleworking professionals where he discovered that the more employees teleworked the greater dissatisfaction they reported with their workplace relationships. Interestingly, the teleworkers’ responses indicated that their peer relationships appeared to have deteriorated to a greater extent than those with their managers. Golden speculates that manager relations may hold greater utility for teleworkers than those with peers, causing

teleworkers to concentrate on the former to the neglect of the latter. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) found a similar effect in their comprehensive meta-analysis of 46 studies. However, the data showed that, rather than deteriorating, teleworkers' relationships with their managers were actually of higher quality under a teleworking arrangement, while relationships with colleagues remained unchanged and at high levels of teleworking intensity began to deteriorate. They propose a similar explanation to Golden for the differential outcomes between manager and peer relationship quality as a result of teleworking, namely that managerial relationships hold comparatively more utility than peer relationships for teleworking employees. However, they additionally suggest that supervisors may also invest greater effort in maintaining relationships with their teleworking subordinates to mitigate a loss of control and the potential for reduced work quality.

In a later study of 375 professional teleworking employees and managers Golden and Veiga (2008) discovered that teleworkers who had higher quality relationships with their managers were more likely to perform better and demonstrate higher satisfaction and commitment than those who had worse quality relationships. However, those with lower quality relationships were more likely to perform better when they were working more extensively in a virtual capacity, rather than less. Furthermore, Golden and Veiga (2008) discovered that the quality of supervisory relationships was a much greater determinant of employee satisfaction levels than the extent of an employee's virtual work. However, the conditions which relate to the quality of relationships and the causal links between relationship quality and the practice of telework are unclear.

### *Section summary*

This section has presented research findings with regards to the commonly identified outcomes of telework on teleworkers' experiences of the practice. The mixed evidence presented regarding teleworking employees' satisfaction, well-being, work-family balance, professional and social isolation, and workplace relationships seems to be due to a number of complex and potentially interlinked individual and situational factors. It seems that the amount of time employees spend teleworking has an effect on all of the proposed outcomes. Additionally, employee's gender and domestic circumstances, particularly with

relation to their perceptions of work-life balance and aspects of their job tasks and level seemingly have an important influence on the outcomes of telework for teleworkers. From the evidence it is clear that the factors specific to an employee's circumstances may influence their demand for and practice of telework. Consequently, focus will now turn to these factors.

### **3.3.2 The influence of individual factors**

#### *Gender and parental status*

There is an assumption throughout the teleworking literature that women still perform traditional social roles and that teleworking may reinforce their societal position if it restricts them to the home (Marsh and Musson, 2008; Silver, 1993; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). Sullivan and Lewis (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 14 male and female home-based workers from different professions and their partners to examine this question. They found that although teleworking did reinforce women's traditional roles they also perceived that telework made their lives easier. They discovered that although men felt working from home allowed them to assist with childcare, in contrast to women they did not consider childcare as primarily their responsibility. This has also been evident in other studies (e.g. Diamond, 2002; Silver, 1993). One explanation for this is that homeworking can threaten the male cultural identity and, more specifically, men's masculinity (Duxbury and Higgins, 1991; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001), causing them to conceptualise their domestic efforts as 'helping' rather than assuming responsibility for domestic tasks in order to retain their masculine identity (Diamond, 2002). This finding would imply that women would be more inclined to opt for telework. However, survey evidence suggests that this is not the case as the majority of recognised teleworkers are men (LFS, 2005).

The evidence related to work-life balance above demonstrates that, in spite of the potential positive outcomes, teleworking may also have negative implications for teleworkers in balancing their work and non-work responsibilities. A number of studies indicate that traditional role perceptions can directly influence teleworkers' experiences, with regard to their work-family balance. For example, reflective of studies elsewhere (e.g. Bailyn, 1989)

Sullivan and Lewis (2001) found that with regards to 'spill-over' between domains, family seemed to spill into work for female teleworkers and work-into family for male teleworkers. However, Shockley and Allen (2007) provide evidence that teleworkers' experiences of spillover may be dependent on teleworkers' perceived responsibility for family, regardless of gender. Their study of professional females revealed that when employees consider domestic duties to be their primary responsibility, they experience low family to work spill-over and reduced work-life conflict when working at home. Conversely, when women perceived their family responsibility as low they reported greater family to work spill-over when embarking on a teleworking arrangement. A study by Marsh and Musson (2008) also indicated that these outcomes are similar for men as those who prioritise family appeared to experience less role conflict. However, their core finding was that male teleworkers who privileged one identity, whether it be their professional or parental identity, experienced less role conflict and emotional exhaustion than those who tried to 'have it all' by prioritising both their professional and parenting roles. Importantly, they predicted that, as women are more likely to feel pressure to achieve success in both roles, they are therefore more likely to experience role conflict and emotional exhaustion than men.

These findings offer support for Huws (1994) who suggested that assigning particular characteristics and outcomes of telework to men and women is problematic as there is variation within both male and female groups. More specifically, in a study which surveyed 188 teleworking translators, they found that female teleworkers can range from those who focus primarily on their traditional role as a housewife using telework to supplement income, to those acting as the main breadwinner whose husbands assume the primary responsibility for domestic tasks. Similarly, male teleworkers ranged from those acting in a 'traditional' breadwinner role to 'New Men' who worked in addition to performing a greater share of domestic responsibilities. However, although this study demonstrates that telework can assist in breaking down traditional roles, in the majority of cases Huws found that men still performed primarily breadwinner roles and women primarily domestic roles.

What these findings may reflect is that men and women choose teleworking for different reasons. Beasley et al's (2001) large study of equal numbers of female and male IT professionals found that for both men and women, the primary motivators of telework were

to spend more time with children and to increase flexibility; though women were significantly more likely to be motivated by these factors than men. Men and women displayed no significant difference on other motivating factors, though men were more likely to cite the need to finish tasks at home that they had not had time to complete in the office, whereas women appreciated the increased opportunity to complete housework. A survey of teleworkers in the Czech Republic provides a rationalisation for these findings. It found that men and women are motivated to work from home at different points in their career. More specifically, men tend to opt for telework at a later stage towards the end of their professional career, whereas women opt for teleworking throughout their professional life but mainly during their mid-career. This career stage corresponds with child rearing for women thus explaining the differing priorities (Kyzlinková and Svobodová, 2007). Elsewhere however, studies have found evidence to the contrary, namely that mothers of school age children are no more likely to opt for teleworking than non-mothers (Collins, 2005; Hamblin, 1995; Huws, 1991) and that teleworking is popular among couples with no children (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Seemingly, in spite of a number of studies examining the relationship between gender and telework authors acknowledge that evidence remains inconclusive (Haddad et al, 2009).

When interpreting findings in relation to gender and employees' experiences of telework it has been argued that family status is potentially of equal or greater importance (Hardill and Green, 2003; Golden, 2006a). Indeed, Hill et al (1996) found that parents, especially parents of pre-school children, perceived teleworking as having a greater positive impact on their lives than non-parents, with gender having a neutral effect. However, evidence presented by Beasley et al (2001) suggests that where teleworkers are parents, female parents place more importance on telework's ability to facilitate increased time with children. Finally, with respect to traditional gender roles an important consideration, investigated further below, is a division of labour among female and male teleworkers. Where teleworkers are seen as peripheral workers, there is some evidence that these roles are more likely to be held by women, which has led to some concern that the arrangement may contribute to their marginalisation, separation and stigmatisation in the workforce (Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Shamir and Salomon, 1985). In this regard Haddon and Brynin (2005) argue that different forms of telework are reflective of traditional forms of social

status. However, the experiences of teleworking men and women in similar roles are less well understood.

### *Gender and Job Type*

It is generally agreed in the literature that managers and professionals tend to be offered greater and more favourable teleworking arrangements than lower-level employees (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Shamir and Salomon, 1985). For example, Olson and Primps (1984) discovered that where professional workers were often offered teleworking in a form conducive to job enrichment, clerical employees received worsened conditions and benefits. Bailey and Kurland's (2002) conclusion that full-time, professional teleworkers tend to be high earning males whereas lower skilled, clerical and part-time teleworkers tend to be lower paid females, provides one potential explanation for differential experiences of teleworking between the genders. However, Haddon and Brynin (2005) found some evidence that although higher paid professional teleworking jobs were occupied predominantly by men and lower status occupations by women; women were still associated with relatively high-status telework. Furthermore, Silver (1993) found that female working-class teleworkers had more positive experiences and perceived less interference between work and family than their female, office-based peers. Consequently the relationship between teleworking employees' personal characteristics and job role requires greater consideration.

### *Autonomy and Job Level*

Another aspect of jobs which has been shown to relate to employees' experiences of telework is the level of autonomy afforded to them in their role (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). In past research, employees have cited increased control over the organisation of their work as their main motivation for choosing telework (Huws, 1994). Indeed, one of the most important factors related to the outcomes of work-life balance is the latitude teleworkers have in controlling not only the place, but the timings of their work (Kossek et al, 2006). Furthermore, others value the opportunity teleworking affords for deciding the method of work, as they believe this can enhance performance (Haddon and Lewis, 1994; Simpson, 2003). In particular Kossek et al (2006) assert that in order to understand how much

flexibility is extended to employees it is important to look beyond an organisation's espoused teleworking policies to the amount of teleworking employees actually undertake in practice. However, in their survey of 245 professional employees in two large Fortune 500 organisations, work-family conflict and depression were significantly lower in employees who perceived they had greater autonomy over where, when and how they conducted their work. Elsewhere Golden et al (2006a) discovered that teleworkers who perceived they had greater job autonomy reported greater work-life conflict when teleworking than those reporting less job autonomy. They suggest a potential explanation might be that those with greater autonomy are more engaged with their jobs and are therefore less likely to use autonomy to address family issues. On the contrary, those with less autonomy may have less job engagement making them more inclined to prioritise family demands.

Overall, the research evidence is inconsistent regarding whether teleworking increases employees' autonomy. Some studies report higher levels of autonomy for teleworkers (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Guimaraes and Dallow, 1999) while others indicate that autonomy may be limited (Valsecchi, 2006; Watad and DiSanzo, 2000). Numerous findings suggest that teleworkers tend to continue to work standard office hours after moving to a teleworking arrangement (Dimitrova, 2003; Hill et al, 1996; Lobel and Kossek, 1996), which demonstrates limited autonomy over when they conduct their work. As previously mentioned, although the results are inconclusive, some studies indicate that teleworking affords different levels of autonomy to employees depending on their job or skill level (Clear and Dickson, 2005, Martinez-Sanchez et al, 2007). For example Felstead et al's (2002) analysis of the WERS data found that where organisations offer teleworking to non-managerial staff teleworkers' jobs tend to be more varied and these employees have more autonomy over where, when and how their tasks can be carried out. Conversely, others have discovered that clerical workers experience less autonomy than professional employees (Brocklehurst, 1989; Olson and Primps, 1984; Ramsower, 1985). Dimitrova (2003), in a qualitative investigation of the telecommunications industry, concluded that switching to a teleworking arrangement did little to alter the autonomy already offered. However, this may be due to the already mobile and specialist nature of the jobs in this study and may not be true for all occupations. For example, the exception in Dimitrova's study was lower-level sales staff. These employees appeared to have limited autonomy and



even tighter controls when conducting telework; whereas senior sales staff and technical staff, who traditionally enjoyed high levels of autonomy, retained their autonomy.

### *Section summary*

Employees' gender and domestic circumstances and their' parental status in particular appear to warrant further consideration when investigating their demand for and practice of telework. Furthermore, characteristics of the job and especially the level of autonomy afforded to teleworkers both prior to and following teleworking is likely to have an effect on employees' teleworking experiences, although this relationship is not entirely clear. One explanation is that a combination of factors including teleworkers' gender, their domestic circumstances and their job type produce differential outcomes for teleworkers'. Consequently, simultaneous consideration of these factors may shed light on the inconsistencies presented in the findings.

### **3.3.3 Research considerations relating to employees' demand for telework**

To date, research has been successful in identifying the outcomes of telework. Nevertheless, a failure to distinguish between types of arrangement such as whether telework is voluntary or involuntary and the extent of teleworking practised inevitably leads to inconsistencies between previous studies regarding the nature of these outcomes (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). For example, supplementary teleworkers appear more likely to experience greater working hours and reduced family time than dedicated or occasional teleworkers (Duxbury et al, 1996). Additionally, they are less likely to be victims of professional and social isolation (Cooper and Kurland, 2002). Also, as most studies do not collect responses from non-teleworkers (Bailey and Kurland, 2002); there is a lack of information concerning the effect of the anticipated consequences of teleworking as a deterrent to non-teleworking employees. A thorough understanding of why employees do not perform telework, or perform it to a limited extent is essential to understanding the limited uptake of teleworking in the employed workforce.

A further concern relates to the prevalence of low response rates, small sample sizes, and context specific studies which cast doubt over the accuracy of findings and prevents them

from being generalised to other settings (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Belanger, 1999b; Gupta et al, 2000; Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996; Mann et al, 2001; Siha and Monroe, 2006). Cross-sectional quantitative studies also render causality difficult to determine. For example, Neufeld and Fang (2005) interpreted their findings by concluding that teleworkers' beliefs and attitudes, and in particular their satisfaction influenced their productivity though the reverse relationship is also feasible. Similarly, studies of work-life balance and integration strategies could well have concluded that family pressures led to integration strategies rather than vice versa (e.g. Kossek et al, 2006). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the true consequences of teleworking, with respect to outcomes such as teleworkers' disconnectedness and professional and social isolation, not to mention the related outcomes of organisational learning and performance, may take years to materialise (Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003).

Causality and further insights into the motivations, feelings and opinions of employees with regards to telework may be accessed and evaluated by using idiographic methods (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Gill and Johnson, 2002; Siha and Monroe, 2006; Wiesenfeld et al, 2001). In particular, methods suggested include more qualitative interview data, focus groups and observational studies (Kossek et al, 2006; Lautsch et al, 2009).

#### **3.3.4 Conclusion relating to the demand for telework**

The discussion above indicates that teleworkers have varied experiences of telework, which may contribute to differences in their demand for telework and the manner in which they perform it. Furthermore, it appears that teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework are likely to be affected by aspects of their job, such as their job characteristics and level, as well as their gender, domestic circumstances and parental responsibilities. However, the evidence presented demonstrates that there is still a lack of clarity regarding when and how these factors lead to differential experiences and indeed whether there is a relationship between them. This lack of clarity is exacerbated by a number of methodological issues, most notably a primary focus on teleworkers and heterogeneous definitions of telework. Overall, it seems that in order to obtain more useful information regarding the circumstances which underpin teleworkers' demand for and practice of

telework, there is a need to investigate how teleworkers' gender, and their domestic circumstances alongside their job role influence their experiences in an integrated way.

### **3.4 Research framework and research questions**

This section discusses and draws together the important points from the previous two sections. The aim is to provide general conclusions, to highlight relevant knowledge gaps, and to present a research framework and research questions which direct the investigation towards reducing these knowledge gaps to enhance our understanding of the diffusion and practice of telework in organisations.

#### **3.4.1 Overarching research question – The diffusion and practice of telework**

The reportedly limited uptake of telework among the employed workforce, discussed in Chapter 2, is an overarching consideration of this thesis. To recap, it is surprising, considering the potential for mutual benefits for employees and organisations, that today so few employees have been found to engage in telework, compared with the projections of the 1990's (Siha and Monroe, 2006). While technological factors may have restricted the expansion of telework in the past (Pilskin, 1998), today there is ubiquitous access to wide bandwidth internet and a plethora of innovations able to support individual and synchronous, collaborative tasks from remote locations (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Pearce, 2009). Consequently, Pilskin's assertion of over ten years ago, that 'the psychological and social factors' associated with telework still contribute to its limited spread (Pilskin, 1998: 76), warrants further investigation.

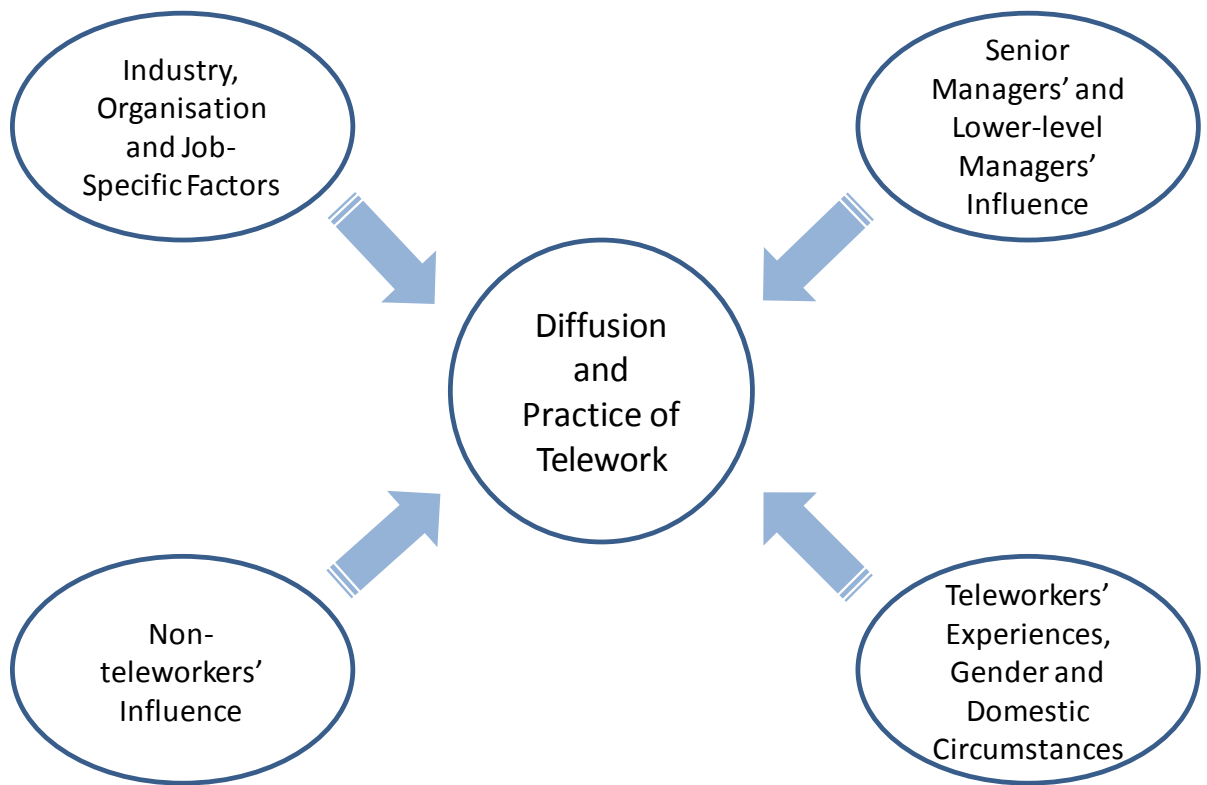
Rigid, yet contrasting definitions of telework, and organisations' differing considerations of what constitutes a 'teleworker' means that extant research findings are often difficult to compare. Moreover, the actual number of teleworkers is unknown (Felstead, 2012; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). Considering the diverse practice of telework within different organisational and individual circumstances and the potential reasons for such diversity is therefore essential in understanding the true nature of telework and could shed light on the

apparently limited spread of this working method. In response, the study addresses this general research question:

**‘What are the factors that affect the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations?’**

#### **3.4.2 Research framework and specific research questions**

Throughout this chapter a number of inconsistencies and research gaps relating to the study of telework have been highlighted. By failing to fully consider the context within which teleworking is performed, much of the teleworking research has fallen short of effectively providing academics with the tools necessary to fully understand the practice and consequences of telework (Dimitrova, 2003). The aim of this study is to work towards addressing these gaps by investigating how telework is manifested in different organisational environments and workplace contexts. The research aims to make sense of the motivations for and outcomes of conducting telework in different circumstances and any reciprocal effect these outcomes have on teleworking practice and ultimately its uptake. In doing so the research seeks to fulfil a recognised need to consider different levels of analysis when investigating the practice of telework (Kossek et al, 2006). The research framework for the study is presented in figure 3.1 and the specific research questions are outlined below.



**Figure 3.1: Research framework**

### *Industry, organisation and job-specific factors*

The discussion of the literature presented above demonstrates the importance of considering the scope for contextual and situational factors to influence the diffusion and practice of telework. Consideration of such factors should enrich our understanding of when, where and how the differential uptake and outcomes of teleworking occur. Previous studies have suggested that the industry context, organisational factors and related to this, the presence of different job roles are likely to affect both the supply and employees' experiences of telework (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Havyatt et al, 2010; Urze, 2005; Perez et al, 2002). However, there remains a lack of clarity over which of these factors have the greatest influence and how they combine to affect the manifestation of telework. Additional research which considers the combined influence of industry, organisational and job-specific factors on employees' participation in telework is considered necessary (Kossek et al, 2006; Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010; Siha and Monroe, 2006).

With respect to the suitability of particular job roles to telework, research has generally focused narrowly on one specific job type (i.e. Bailyn, 1989; Harrington and Ruppel, 1999), which makes results difficult to generalise. Alternatively, researchers broadly classify teleworkers into ‘professional’ or ‘clerical’ employees (e.g. Feldman and Gainey, 2003; Golden and Veiga, 2005; Huws, 1991), which provides little information concerning how outcomes relate to the characteristics of teleworkers’ jobs. Furthermore, the use of terms such as ‘knowledge worker’ (Clear and Dickson, 2005) can apply to a great many jobs, not all of which may be equally suited to telework. More research is needed to understand how the particular characteristics of jobs relate to the diffusion and practice of telework (Kossek et al, 2006). Furthermore, remaining sensitive towards the context of teleworking arrangements should enhance our understanding of how teleworking is performed within different job roles (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Kossek et al, 2006; Siha and Monroe, 2006). Consequently, it is argued that a thorough, contextually based investigation of the diffusion and practice of telework within different job roles and within different organisational and industry contexts will provide clarity with respect to employees’ experiences of telework (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In the light of this context, the first specific research question is:

**Q1 - What is the influence of the industry, organisational and job specific factors on the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements?**

*The influence of managers*

The discussion relating to the supply of telework above illustrates that it has many recognised advantages for organisations in terms of performance and staffing benefits. However, managers often display anxieties towards its use (Lautsch and Kossek, 2011). Perez et al (2002) describe managers as the biggest barriers to the adoption of telework. Several studies have suggested that top management support in particular is essential to successful telework adoption, as senior managers strongly influence the manner in which telework is strategically positioned within the organisation (Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010; Watad and DiSanzo, 2000). To date, sparse consideration has been given to the process by which senior managers influence the manifestation of telework within different organisational contexts.

Teleworkers' direct managers have also been shown to have a strong influence on the adoption of telework, acting as gatekeepers to the practice (Lautsch and Kossek, 2011). Teleworkers' direct managers also influence the manner in which telework is performed and experienced by employees (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Felstead et al, 2003; Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Kurland and Cooper, 2002). However, relatively limited attention has been directed towards managers in the literature, especially with regards to their management of non-teleworkers (Lautsch and Kossek, 2011). Studies which have adopted this focus suggest that managers' behaviour impacts both teleworkers' and non-teleworkers' experience of telework (Felstead et al, 2003; Lautsch and Kossek, 2011). Managers may therefore influence not only the supply of telework but its demand among employees. Gaining an enhanced, contextually-based understanding of managers' perceptions of telework and their behavioural responses to it is essential to understanding when and how telework is undertaken. Consequently, the second research question asks:

**Q2 - How do senior managers and lower-level managers affect the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements?**

*The influence of non-teleworkers*

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests potential drawbacks and disruption to teleworkers' peers, and potentially their subordinates', working lives. However, the limited research in this area inhibits a deep understanding of the social consequences of telework (Felstead et al, 2003; Lautsch and Kossek, 20011). Examining the effect of teleworking on non-teleworkers is important for at least three reasons. First, it provides a means for understanding these employees' perceptions of telework and their resultant behaviours towards teleworkers in a professional and social sense which may, at least partially, determine teleworkers' experiences (Lautsch et al, 2009), practice and the ultimate success of a teleworking initiative (Neufeld and Fang, 2005). Second, in a more general sense, as members of staff important to the success of the organisation, it provides an insight into the effects of teleworking on non-teleworkers' attitudes, which potentially affects their own interaction with managers and the organisation (Meyer et al, 2001; Podsakoff et al, 2000). Third, consideration of non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework can shed light on their own reasons for abstaining from telework which is vital to understanding why

employees with the opportunity to participate in teleworking refrain from doing so. Focusing on these issues, the third specific research question is:

**Q3 How do non-teleworkers affect the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements?**

*Teleworkers experiences and the influence of gender domestic circumstances*

Telework leads to a variety of outcomes, discussed above, such as improved work-life balance, work-family conflict, social inclusion, social isolation, improved performance and professional isolation. Experience of these outcomes may affect employees' initial or continued demand for teleworking, thus affecting its uptake. Studies which focus on the outcomes of telework for teleworkers have produced mixed results. Telework has been described as resulting in a 'paradox of incompatible consequences' (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007: 1526) where teleworkers must trade-off benefits in one domain for benefits in other (Diamond, 2002; Stoner et al, 2008). However, in their meta-analysis of the outcomes of telework Gajendran and Harrison (2007: 1526) suggested that telework was 'mainly a good thing' and found no evidence for such a paradox. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) emphasise the comparative power and usefulness of meta-analysis for picking a main effect which offers a more accurate reflection of the consequences of telework than many of the studies that they draw upon which have small sample sizes. However, their analysis did not take non-teleworkers' or ex-teleworkers' responses into account. It is therefore impossible to tell whether and how many teleworkers refrained from telework or de-selected themselves from telework following unfavourable experiences.

The evidence suggests that teleworkers' gender contributes to their experiences of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Additionally, some research, discussed above, suggests that teleworkers' parental status may in fact be more significant in explaining differential outcomes than gender (Hardill and Green, 2003) though this is debated. Furthermore, men and women's segregation into different types of jobs may mean they face different pressures in the work place which influence their uptake of telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). An examination of the different experiences of teleworking and non-teleworking men and women within similar and different roles is necessary to determine the influence



of job characteristics in addition to, or even in place of, gender on teleworkers' differing experiences. Accordingly, the fourth and final specific research question is:

**Q4 - How do teleworkers' experiences and the gender and domestic circumstances of the teleworker affect the diffusion and practice of telework in organisations?**

A multi-level analysis which includes consideration of these four specific research questions should enable an enhanced, more integrated, understanding of when, how and why telework is practised and, importantly, why it is not practised. The following chapter outlines the approach taken to investigating these factors and provides details of the research context.

## **CHAPTER 4: Methodology and Research Context**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter has four purposes. First, it describes and explains the reasons for adopting a qualitative, ‘evolved’ grounded theory approach to the research (Mills et al, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Second, it provides details of the research context and explains the choice of research sites. Third, it provides details of the study participants and an explanation for the methods used to select participants. Fourth, it outlines the methods of data analysis used, with respect to Strauss and Corbin’s evolved grounded theory approach (1990). The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of ethical issues and a chapter summary.

### **4.2 Choice of research approach**

The study was expressly interested in the behaviours and perspectives of, and the interplay between, different groups within organisations. A qualitative research strategy was adopted which focused on the acquisition and analysis of data from numerous stakeholders in teleworking environments. As previously discussed, a frequently recognised methodological weakness in extant teleworking research is a tendency for studies to focus on individual teleworkers and/or to rely solely on quantitative research designs (Bailey and Kurland, 2002, Fogarty et al, 2011, Lautsch, 2009). Reliance on quantitative methods seems particularly surprising where studies investigate elements of the social context of telework (i.e. Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Golden, 2006b; 2007). Therefore, the importance of collecting qualitative data from teleworkers and those affected by teleworking is that it provides a means for understanding the perceptions of multiple stakeholders and their resultant behaviours toward one another. This, in turn, helps to determine the complex causality of outcomes which result from teleworking (Gill and Johnson, 2002).

#### **4.2.1 Grounded theory method**

The chosen approach for this study was an evolved grounded theory methodology. The use of this methodology provides a valuable contribution to the existing body of research, as scholars have emphasised the need to develop grounded theories of teleworking to make sense of the phenomenon and shed light on diverse findings (Siha and Monroe, 2006). An emphasis on the perceptions and interrelationships between actors, within organisations, accentuated by this approach (Douglas, 2003) provides a ‘best fit’ with respect to the research questions. By developing theoretical concepts throughout the process of data collection, rather than relying on rigid categories set out before data collection begins, grounded theory encourages a focus on context and produces valuable insights into the social experiences of participants (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Such insights can assist in the identification of ‘patterns of action and interaction among various social units’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 278). The study seeks to understand the influence of interactions between employees, managers, subordinates, peers and non-peers within different contexts on the diffusion and practice of telework, and as such, a grounded theory approach is both appropriate and valuable.

#### **4.2.2 Ontological and epistemological position**

The study sought to focus on organisational and group dynamics, and to acquire data pertaining to individuals’ personal perceptions and interpretations of others’ intentions and behaviours. It was therefore felt that the research questions proposed would be most suited to the paradigmatic approach favoured by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1994). Strauss and Corbin present an ‘evolved grounded theory’ (Mills et al, 2006) which differs from the traditional approach proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in terms of ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge and the ‘knower’). Strauss and Corbin’s evolved approach assumes a relativist ontology, which, in contrast to the traditional realist approach (Glaser, 1992), allows for the acceptance of legitimate differences in conceptions of reality between individuals (Mills et al, 2006). The subjectivist and interpretivist epistemological position, which accompanies this relativist ontology, assumes that humans ‘do not passively react to external reality, but impose their internal perception and ideals on the external world and, in doing so, actively create their

reality' (Suddaby, 2006: 636). This study of telework makes use of the assumption that individuals within the same environment can have differing perceptions and interpretations of reality, and that these perceptions are not static. The study seeks to understand how the interactions between the perceptions of different parties in a teleworking environment, and the behaviours which derive from them, reciprocally influence individuals' perceptions and behaviours, and/or alter or reinforce individual realities.

#### **4.2.3 Historical and contextual position**

Evolved grounded theory places emphasis on the historical context of the phenomenon under investigation (Strauss and Corbin, 1994), an approach which is beneficial when considering the evolving nature and function of telework within the workforce, as outlined in Chapter 2 (Huws, 1991; Pearce, 2009; Peters et al, 2004). More specifically, the approach allows theory to constitute 'the prevailing consensus at any time regarding multiple perspectives of a phenomenon' (Annells, 1996: 386). This means that the theory is modifiable and can be legitimately adapted to reflect a new consensus as perceptions of telework and its contributions and outcomes continue to evolve. Importantly the theory can be developed and retain utility in a changing world. Furthermore, evolved grounded theory adopts a 'constructivist' approach (Annells, 2006; Mills et al, 2006), which in contrast to traditional grounded theory, allows for theorising beyond the confines of the immediate environment toward wider social issues (Layder, 1993). The research framework of the study and proposed research questions require consideration of the wider social context in which telework is performed and experienced. In particular, it considers the role of women, and links between employees' occupations and their social position in society (Annells, 1996; Schwandt, 1994; Silver, 1993). Consequently, evolved grounded theory presents an attractive approach in light of the intended scope of the study and utility of the findings.

#### **4.2.4 Benefits of theoretical sensitivity and sampling**

Theoretical sensitivity is defined as:

*'An awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. [...] the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to*

*understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't.*  
(Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 42)

An essential difference between the traditional grounded theory approach and the evolved approach, used within this study, is the notion that awareness and sensitivity can and should derive from previous exposure to information and experience where it usefully assists in theory development (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Mills et al, 2006; Pandit, 1996). In their book, *The Basics of Qualitative Research* (2008) which guided the research, Corbin and Strauss describe the usefulness of ‘sensitivity’ for assessing the relevancy of data and quote Dey (1993: 63) who emphasised that an ‘open mind’ does not require an ‘empty head’. The benefit of being able to draw on previous knowledge was particularly appealing for two reasons. First and foremost, the field of telework research has become well established (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). As such, there was a desire to direct the research and seek useful insights by elaborating on and clarifying existing evidence and avoiding ‘reinventing the wheel’ (Suddaby, 2006). In this regard, having the opportunity to reflect on past literature was invaluable in identifying knowledge gaps, and therefore in targeting and structuring the research question and initial sampling (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Second, the researcher has previous personal and professional experience in the field of telework. In the evolved grounded theory approach the analyst is described as a ‘crucial interactant’ in the research process (Strauss & Corwin, 1994: 169). This enabled previous professional and personal experience to be harnessed as a valuable resource when interpreting the data (Jones and Nobel, 2007).

A final benefit of the grounded theory approach is the flexibility afforded by theoretical sampling (Strauss, 1987). For example, as the research progressed, it became apparent that stakeholders outside the immediate sample had a significant impact on the practice and uptake of telework, as well as having valuable insights into the outcomes of this working method. The grounded theory approach enabled the researcher to adapt the methodology, and thereby incorporate these important and influential perspectives that were not initially foreseen.

### **4.3 The research context**

The research organisations were a local authority (Local-Gov) based on the South Coast of England; an international high-technology organisation (High-Tech); and the UK operation of a large international telecommunications organisation (Tel-Com). The names of these organisations have been changed throughout the study. A brief description of the research contexts are outlined here and additional details are provided in the following empirical chapters.

#### **4.3.1 Local-Gov**

Local-Gov is based on the South Coast of England. The research was conducted within the linked departments of Property and Procurement, Housing Solutions, Communication, Health and Care, and Children's Services and Learning. Some formal teleworking has been provided in all of these areas for several years. Four years before the research took place the organisation conducted a formal teleworking pilot of around 30 employees. The selected individuals no longer had a desk in the office, and had their normal place of work entered into their employment contract as 'home'. However, Local-Gov had struggled with efforts to expand formal teleworking, although formal teleworkers were still employed. More recently, attempts to enhance flexibility involved the introduction of hot-desks within the office to assist with a desired reduction in space. Extensive outsourcing and restructuring had also accompanied these changes. Notably since the last visit to the organisation, made during a previous research project, many of the formal teleworkers had moved back into the office, at least for the majority of the working week.

Traditionally within Local-Gov, teleworking had been used to facilitate individuals' continued employment in cases of special needs such as the accommodation of disabilities. More recently, teleworking has been directed towards the dual purpose of reducing office space by 30% (to meet government targets), and improving flexibility. Regarding flexibility, teleworking has been added to an established list of flexible working practices, which include part-time working, flex-time and job share. According to management this flexibility was both an end in itself and a means of achieving a 'fair balance' within the workforce. Future plans included further restructuring of working practices and office

space, such as developing communal ‘break out’ areas for discussion and for teleworkers to make use of during ‘office-days’, and the wider distribution of equipment which supports ad hoc teleworking. There was a formal teleworking policy which was available to all employees. However, ad hoc teleworking did not appear to be available for most employees as, at the time of research, prospective teleworkers were required to request a formal teleworking arrangement in order to access the necessary equipment to conduct telework. Management were aware of a responsibility to encourage more people to use teleworking if they were to meet office space targets. In order to be granted teleworking, employees were required to apply through an organisational process in accordance with the policy, and the decision rested largely with the individual’s manager.

Access was obtained through correspondence with an existing contact from previous research, a senior manager from the Property and Procurement division. (An example of the correspondence sent to gain access to the organisations is presented in Appendix 1). Following further correspondence, clearance from the LA’s recognised union was obtained. It was agreed that a report would be submitted on completion of the research.

#### **4.3.2 High-Tech**

High-Tech is a large, multi-national corporation which supplies network equipment and network management for use over the internet. The study primarily took place among distributed technical consulting professionals with job titles such as ‘Solutions Architect’ and ‘Network Consulting Engineer’. Participants worked with clients in various locations, providing knowledge on *‘making internet technology work’*. All interviewees had the opportunity to work from home when required, and most did so for the majority of the time when not out visiting clients. When team members attended the office, usually in order to access specialist equipment, they used a ‘hot-desk’ arrangement. Teleworking was prevalent across the whole organisation and many employees required teleworking equipment to conduct their daily tasks. There was no formal teleworking policy and the management describe extensive teleworking as *‘just the way things are’*, *‘the way the place operates’* and *‘a given part of the culture’*.

Access was obtained through a contact within the organisation and cleared with the HR Director, who also provided an interview to explain the organisation's context and approach to teleworking. It was agreed that a memo detailing the overall findings of the research within this context would be provided to the team and to the head of HR following data analysis.

#### **4.3.3 Tel-Com**

Tel-Com provides fixed, mobile and broadband services in the UK and numerous countries throughout Europe. The UK operation consists of a number of offices around the country. The research took place across all areas of the UK operation. Teleworking was used extensively among Tel-Com's workforce but was practised differently between individuals and areas of the organisation. In some job roles, telework was imposed (predominantly sales and some mobile technical jobs), whereas in other areas it was prohibited (in lower level customer service roles, and roles in which work was attached to a physical space, such as for shop assistants). In many other job roles, teleworking was provided on a voluntary basis by agreement between the teleworker and their manager. In order to be granted teleworking, employees were required to be in a job deemed suitable for telework, a designation which was heavily reliant on the approval of supervisors. A written teleworking policy existed and was available to all staff, though some employees were not aware of it. When teleworkers attended the office they often used hot-desks, sometimes in a functional area and sometimes in a general area, depending on job role and location. A few teleworkers retained desk space in the office.

Access was obtained by approaching the head of Employee Engagement, who subsequently obtained clearance from appropriate members of the HR team. It was agreed that on completion of the research a report would be made available to management and participants, and that the results would be presented over conference calls to senior company members in both the UK and Europe.



#### **4.4 Choice of research sites**

The focus organisations were targeted for two reasons. First, the research aimed to investigate how the diffusion and practice of telework is influenced by the industry and organisational context. Previous research has indicated that management control methods and teleworkers' outcomes may be related to public or private ownership (Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Taskin and Edwards, 2007). Variations in ownership and governance generally result in diverse organisational cultures, which have also been argued to influence the supply and practice of telework and its outcomes for teleworkers (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Harrington and Ruppel, 1999; Harrington and Santiago, 2006; Taskin and Edwards, 2007). As diverse cultures are thought to support telework differently, and given disagreement regarding the effect of organisational culture on telework, these organisations were felt to provide a contrasting set of cultural environments within which to conduct the research. Including both public and private organisations in the study enabled consideration of the effects of these differing work cultures as factors when comparing and contrasting outcomes for teleworkers within similar and different occupations.

Second, the choice of research sites also enabled access to diverse occupations. Certain occupations, such as social work and professional service consulting were only present within specific environments and therefore the inclusion of diverse organisations was required to gain access to them. However, as certain occupations were present in more than one organisation, for example technology professionals, project managers, facilities managers, human resource professionals and support staff, it was also useful to note any similarities and differences between the experiences of these individuals in different contexts. In general, examining telework within diverse organisational environments was expected to display any similarities and differences in practice and outcomes within these environments, aiding the credibility and transferability/extrapolation of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

## 4.5 Study informants

Details of participants' teleworking status and gender are displayed in table 4.1. Despite aiming to include equal numbers of teleworkers and non-teleworkers, after reclassification (owing to ambiguities in company-provided data at Tel-Com), informants consisted of 61 teleworking and 39 non-teleworking employees.

	Teleworkers			Non-teleworkers			Totals		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
High Tech	8	0	<b>8</b>	2	0	<b>2</b>	10	0	<b>10</b>
Local Gov	2	8	<b>10</b>	5	5	<b>10</b>	7	13	<b>20</b>
Tel-Com	26	17	<b>43</b>	12	15	<b>27</b>	38	32	<b>70</b>
Totals	<b>36</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>
Percentages	59.0%	41.0%		48.7%	51.3%		55.0%	45.0%	

**Table 4.1: Sample demographics**

Six participants worked part-time: two non-teleworkers and four teleworkers. Numerous job types were represented, including: administrative support; compliance; health and safety professionals; marketing; advertising; public relations; customer services; technology; finance, professional services; business sales; consumer sales; architects; social services; technical consulting; technical design; facilities management; human resources; engineers; and procurement. Following analysis, these occupations were grouped and reclassified. These classifications are referred to below but outlined in full in the following chapter. When the sample was originally selected, care was taken to include equal numbers of female and male teleworkers and non-teleworkers within occupational areas. However, after reclassification women were over-represented in 'internal-standardised' roles (which included lower-level 'in house' employees) and men were overrepresented in technical-teams and external-independent roles (which were standalone, specialist roles with external client-facing responsibilities such as consultants).

### 4.5.1 Differences between the samples at the focus organisations

At High-Tech teleworkers performed internal-independent and external-independent roles or worked within technical teams. All participants had the opportunity to telework. At

Local-Gov, all participants performed internal-independent and internal-standardised roles or worked within technical or non-technical teams. All participants had the option to make a request for telework. At Tel-Com, 13 of the 43 teleworkers were involuntary teleworkers. Of the 27 non-teleworkers 15 of the non-teleworkers were prohibited from voluntary teleworking. At Tel-Com all classifications of job role (as outlined in Chapter 5) were represented among teleworkers and non-teleworkers.

#### **4.5.2 Additional sample information**

Teleworkers were slightly older than non-teleworkers overall, and men were slightly older than women in both teleworking and non-teleworking samples. Regarding the family environment, a higher percentage of teleworkers than non-teleworkers were married and fairly equal percentages of male and female teleworkers were married or living with a partner. There was a slightly higher percentage of married male non-teleworkers than married female non-teleworkers. A higher percentage of teleworkers had children under five than non-teleworkers, but a slightly higher percentage of non-teleworkers had children aged between five and fifteen. In general, substantially more men, whether teleworkers or non-teleworkers, had children in these two age categories. The biggest difference regarding children was between female and male non-teleworkers, where substantially more male non-teleworkers had children under five than female non-teleworkers. Teleworkers were educated more highly than non-teleworkers overall, and this was true for both females and males when compared to non-teleworkers, though the difference was much more pronounced for female teleworkers when compared to female non-teleworkers.

Teleworkers overall had longer tenures than non-teleworkers throughout the sample, and this was most pronounced when comparing male teleworkers to male non-teleworkers. Female teleworkers worked at home on average slightly fewer days per week than male teleworkers, but there was more variation in the number of days spent teleworking for female teleworkers. On average, teleworkers worked more hours above their contracted working hours than non-teleworkers, and this was more pronounced for men. Furthermore, male teleworkers were most likely to work over their contracted hours, while female non-teleworkers were least likely to work in excess of their contracted hours.

### **4.5.3 Considerations**

The following caveats with respect to the participants should be acknowledged. First, the original intention was to classify participants into the four categories of teleworkers, peers, managers and subordinates, but it soon became apparent that such distinctions were problematic since participants often fell into more than one classification. For example, where teleworking was prevalent, participants could sometimes fulfil all of these roles. This reflects the complexity of relationships within the teleworking workforce (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999). For this reason where examples are provided in the research findings, the participant's most pertinent characteristics are highlighted. Second, during the interview process it emerged that a number of non-teleworkers had previous experience of teleworking and some still performed telework on an informal basis. In some cases where participants performed telework regularly they were re-classified as teleworkers. Where participants no longer teleworked or did so very occasionally, they remained classified as non-teleworkers as it was felt that these employees did not telework often enough to be considered teleworkers.

### **4.5.4 Selection of participants**

The selection of participants was influenced both by the research questions and the extent of access available in each organisation. Theoretical sampling, which is described as a 'hallmark of the grounded theory approach' (Draucker et al, 2007: 1137) was employed to some extent in all organisations, but most notably in Tel-Com, where the scope for access was greatest. The aim of theoretical sampling is to identify 'incidences, slices of life, time periods or people on the basis of their manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs' (Patton, 2001: 238). With regards to the research question it became apparent that important insights could be provided from individuals other than teleworkers and their managers, peers and subordinates. These individuals included: members of teleworking associations and steering groups; company directors; suppliers; employees with no immediate contact with teleworkers (both managers and non-managers); union representatives; and, most notably, ex-teleworkers. The consideration and inclusion of these participants was also informed by reflection on existing literature (e.g. Ellison, 1999) throughout the research process. For example, ex-teleworkers were included as it was felt

that they could provide a more insightful and informative examination of why employees return to non-teleworking arrangements, as suggested by Ellison (1999). The selection of participants within the different organisations will now be considered in more detail.

At Local-Gov, participants were targeted by the organisation and all known teleworkers in the focus areas were invited to participate. Non-teleworkers were also targeted by the organisation. A list of contact details for both teleworkers and non-teleworkers was supplied to the researcher, who contacted them directly. There were also two participants who were selected by referral from participants on the original contact list. In total 22 participants were approached, of which two (both non-teleworkers) declined to participate.

At High-Tech, all members within the focus area were invited to participate, which included nine teleworkers and two non-teleworkers. Two teleworkers declined to participate. Theoretical sampling resulted in the inclusion of a teleworking director of human resources, leading to a total of ten participants of which eight were teleworkers.

Finally, at Tel-Com, a list of all UK employees was supplied to the researcher which classified employees into occupational areas, and as teleworkers and non-teleworkers. It was agreed that 70 interviews could take place in total. Employees were stratified by occupational area and gender in the company data provided, then selected at random by the researcher from the list of the teleworking population. Where teleworkers declined or did not respond, randomly-selected alternative employees were contacted. In total, 48 teleworkers were contacted until 35 agreed to participate. It was decided that at least 2 female and 2 male employees from each occupational area should be interviewed where possible, to compare perspectives and help preserve participants' anonymity. 17 of the non-teleworking employees were selected in the same manner and the remaining 18 through theoretical sampling by seeking referrals from teleworkers. Referrals were taken for two reasons. First, initial interviews revealed that a number employees categorised as 'non-teleworkers' within the company data performed telework to some extent, and referrals enabled true non-teleworkers to be accessed. Second, non-teleworkers had experience of working with interviewed teleworkers, and referrals benefitted the research by capturing the essence of working relationships. In total, 39 non-teleworkers were contacted to obtain 35

participants. Again, to ensure anonymity, at least 2 female and 2 male non-teleworking participants from each occupation were selected where possible.

## **4.6 Procedure and analysis**

### **4.6.1 Data triangulation**

Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1994) strongly endorse the use of multiple data sources and collection methods to aid data triangulation. This can enhance the internal validity of the findings and provides ‘synergistic evidence,’ aiding reliability (Eisenhardt, 1989; Pandit, 1996). Accordingly, in addition to using multiple respondents, multiple data collection methods were used. Furthermore, in accordance with the evolved grounded theory approach, data collection and analysis were followed and accompanied by comparison of the emergent findings with previous literature (Mills et al, 2006). This allows for further data triangulation and improves internal reliability, through the clarification of construct definitions and external reliability by comparing and contrasting the findings with other studies (Pandit, 1996). The data collection methods employed in this study will now be examined in more detail.

### **4.6.2 Interviews**

As there was a clear focus for the research, semi-structured interviews were used, which are considered particularly appropriate for grounded theory research (Wengraf, 2001). Semi-structured interviews allowed for an examination of the focal issues whilst providing essential scope for exploring additional avenues as they arose. Interview schedules were compiled which addressed the original conditions of interest in the research questions, and these were continually updated during the research process to reflect emerging issues. (The interview schedules used in the research are presented in Appendix 2). Open questions were used to introduce topics and where necessary, participants were encouraged to elaborate, clarify or provide examples with respect to their answers. The ordering of questions depended on the particular flow of the conversation in the interview (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

The interview schedules were piloted on a convenience sample of two individuals, a teleworker and their organisationally-based colleague. These individuals were employed independently of any of the focus organisations. The purpose of the pilot was to obtain feedback on the content of the questions and to gain interviewing experience (Goulding, 2002). Subsequently, 10 qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out over a three week period at High-Tech, 20 interviews were carried out over a two week period at Local-Gov and 70 interviews were carried out over an 11 week period at Tel-Com. The questioning was designed to allow participants to reflect at length on experiences and behaviours and to bring to the surface opinions and deeply-held beliefs. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

#### **4.6.3 Focus groups**

Three focus groups were conducted during the research process. The first two were mini focus groups conducted with four office-based support staff within Local-Gov and four teleworking members of a distributed team within Tel-Com respectively. The third was a teleconference focus group conducted over the phone with 12 teleworkers from a number of different organisations within the telecommunications industry. Tape recording was not permitted in the focus groups, but field notes were taken and subsequently coded, in accordance with interview data.

Focus groups are useful for minimising researcher bias in questioning, as participants often question each other (Bryman and Bell, 2003). A significant benefit of focus groups is the 'group effect' where insightful and otherwise inaccessible data can be generated from the process of interaction as participants can share experience, and in doing so trigger further memories of events (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). This was particularly useful when discussing teleworkers' experiences, as these employees often work in isolation and therefore may not discuss or reflect on their experiences with others to the same extent as non-teleworkers who work proximately with others. Additionally, focus groups can be effective in encouraging enlightening responses from individuals who may lack voice or experience isolation (Tracy et al, 2006); both considered to be common issues for teleworkers (Rogerson and Fairweather, 1997).

#### **4.6.4 Direct and participant observation**

Often, during qualitative interviews and focus groups, participants alluded to the function and utility of their team meetings and subsequent social time with regards to their experiences of telework. Consequently, in accordance with theoretical sampling (Strauss, 1987), access was gained to one such meeting and the related social event. The purpose of this direct (during the meeting) and participant (during the event) observation was to gain first-hand, specific insights into how physical meetings between teleworking employees were experienced and utilised from both a professional and social perspective (Trochim, 2006). The team in question was a small Corporate Sales team within Tel-Com. The meeting lasted for a full working day and was attended by the team members, their manager, a marketing professional, a finance professional, an IT professional, and two individuals from a supplier organisation. These observations complemented the interviews by allowing a comparison between participants' reported and observed behaviour, and offering a deeper understanding of the actions of different stakeholders within a group context. In particular, the observations provided an invaluable understanding of the 'people, context, ideas, norms and events' within the employees' real working context (Mack et al, 2005: 14). (Field notes from the sales meeting are presented in Appendix 3).

#### **4.6.5 Supplementary information**

The use of 'non-technical literature' is endorsed by Strauss and Corbin (1994), as it can provide important contextual information, including organisational motivations, structures and policies (Pettigrew, 1985) which shape the perceptions and experiences of the focal population. In addition to the primary data collection methods outlined, supplementary data relating to the organisations and their teleworking and non-teleworking populations was acquired where possible. In Local-Gov, documents relating to the teleworking policy and internal staff survey findings were provided to the researcher. At Tel-Com, extensive information was provided regarding teleworking initiatives and policies, as well as data collected by an independent academic expert who worked closely with the organisation's HR team. A representative of the recognised trade union at Tel-Com provided data regarding teleworking initiatives and related newsletters, and shared useful anecdotes of reported experiences and attitudes of teleworkers throughout the telecommunications



industry. To an extent, this information enabled the interview data to be understood within a wider context by providing insights into the ‘meso and macro conditions’ under which participants experienced, and made sense of, the phenomenon under investigation (Mills et al, 2006: 5).

## **4.7 Data analysis**

The data were analysed in accordance with Strauss and Corbin’s approach (1990; 1998) ‘where data collection, analysis and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 12). In this regard, the method was iterative and progressive, as data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and cyclically so that when new and interesting insights were identified, they could be explored in subsequent interviews (Seidel, 1998). Where necessary, re-interviewing or contact via email was used to explore these avenues with participants. In this way the research was also recursive, as reflection influenced a return to data collection (Seidel, 1998). Data collection was restricted by access, in terms of the number of participants available within the organisations, although subsequent contact with participants was permitted. Further collection of data from existing participants, and from those approached outside of the organisations through theoretical sampling, lasted until a significant amount of repetition was apparent. Categories were confirmed, indicating theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 62).

### **4.7.1 Coding**

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher throughout the research period. In accordance with Strauss and Corbin’s methodology (1998), the transcripts were then examined word by word and line by line, and initially coded using open coding, where original codes were created by the researcher, to label concepts in the raw data. Concepts were then grouped to create categories, which related to specific areas of interest and emerging areas. Within these areas, additional codes were also used to identify particular causes, conditions and consequences. These codes were then re-examined and grouped into new or merged categories. Subsequently, sub-categories were identified and axial coding

was employed to identify relationships between categories (Mills et al, 2006). More specifically, codes were grouped in accordance with particular conditions: participants' favourable (sub-category) or unfavourable (sub-category) experiences (category/consequence) within a job type (category/condition). Then, codes were linked with other categories. For example, Managers' supportive (sub-category/strategy) or resistant (sub-category/strategy) behaviour influenced (process) subordinates' teleworking experiences (category/consequence) and teleworking practice (category/consequence). Finally, selective coding (in parallel with memoing and diagramming) was employed which enabled the identification of the core category (Pandit, 1996) which emerged as 'the acceptability of telework'.

To demonstrate: Strong (sub-category) perceived organisational support for telework (category) which was used to enhance performance (strategy/sub-category) led (process) managers to consider telework (condition) acceptable (core category) within external-independent roles (sub-category /condition) as it was of benefit to the organisation (category). The related (axial) supportive (sub-category) management behaviour (strategy) prevented (process axial - consequence) non-teleworkers' resistance (strategy) which reduced (process, axial, consequence) teleworkers' requirement to perform defensive flexibility (strategy) and protected teleworkers' professional outcomes (category/consequence). These favourable (sub-category) experiences of telework (category/consequence) for teleworkers led (process) telework (condition) to be considered acceptable (core category) within external-independent roles (condition/category) increasing (sub-category) demand for the practice (category/consequence).

Consistent with the evolved grounded theory method, identification of this core category was achieved through the constant comparison of interview data with previously collected data, and with emerging categories and theoretical insights (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Suddaby, 2006). The discovery that the degree to which telework was considered 'acceptable' by multiple parties within different conditions was identified as pivotal to its practice (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Consequently, identifying the factors that affected perception of the acceptability of telework shed light on the supply of telework by the organisations and managers and demand for it by employees. Identification of the 'types' of teleworker, outlined in Chapter 8, followed from this analysis as the perceived acceptability

of telework from the perspectives of the organisation, teleworkers and non-teleworkers was inherent to the outcomes experienced by these different ‘types’. Furthermore, teleworkers’ understanding of whether their ‘type’ of telework was considered to be ‘acceptable,’ and the amount of ‘acceptable’ telework they felt able to conduct within their proposed ‘type’ offered perspective on their propensity to participate in telework and their experiences of doing so. (A table displaying higher-level categories and sub-categories is presented in Appendix 4).

#### **4.7.2 Memoing**

Memoing, which described the recording of thoughts and ideas by the researcher during the research process (Trochim, 2006), was used extensively throughout data collection, coding and analysis. Memoing assisted the identification of relationships between concepts and categories and was essential to the progression and articulation of the emerging theory. In particular, memoing allowed for the creative flow of ideas and fostered originality, as acknowledged in other studies (e.g. Cutcliffe, 2003). Additionally, memoing was particularly useful in comparing different abstractions of reality interpreted from the raw data with respect to distinct occupational groups, informing future interview questions, and highlighting the need to re-contact previous participants for clarification. (An example of merged memos is presented in Appendix 5).

#### **4.7.3 Analytical tools**

Concept cards were used for ease of data comparison, and diagrams were drawn to map the flow of relationships between concepts and to identify theory (Allan, 2003). Once concept cards had been created, the perceptions and experiences of participants in particular job roles were more visible. Alongside memos, concept cards were therefore used to create profiles of job types. (An example of a concept card is presented in Appendix 6). The identification of job types led to the reclassification of job roles, as company groupings of jobs into occupational areas could be very wide and their fit within certain occupations ambiguous. For example, there were a number of instances where administration staff or technical professionals sat within other groupings and were classified as members of that group, and therefore were not being compared with like work. Responses were matched

with proximate colleagues where possible, to understand group dynamics, aid data triangulation and provide clarity and a more balanced perspective (Bailey and Kurland, 2002).

A criticism of the grounded theory method has been a propensity to lose sight of the bigger picture by focusing too strongly on theory generation (Suddaby, 2006). In particular, one concern has been that this focus involves ‘breaking up, separating or disassembling research material into pieces, parts, elements or units’ (Jorgensen, 1989: 107) which can then lose valuable contextual significance (Mills et al, 2006). For this reason, during analysis, where interesting findings emerged, whole transcripts were re-read to retain a contextual focus (Mills et al, 2006; Suddaby, 2006). Transcripts were also re-examined to ensure they had received similar treatment in the coding process and, in particular, to add verification to identified types. This practice should act to enhance construct validity (Pandit, 1996) and enabled the researcher to retain awareness of the data throughout the research process

## **4.8 Ethical considerations**

### **4.8.1 Disclosure and consent**

Guillenin and Gillan (2004) describe two basic dimensions of ethical consideration when conducting research, namely procedural considerations (obtaining appropriate authority), and issues which arise in the general practice of research. With regards to procedural considerations, the research was cleared with the ethics committee at the researcher’s institution and with all responsible parties at all of the organisations involved in the study, including recognised unions where necessary.

With regards to practical issues, all participants in the research (including all interview and focus group participants, and all those who were subject to observation) were informed of the existence and purpose of the research and were given the option either to decline participation or to withdraw at any time. All interviewees were provided with an information sheet detailing the purpose of the research and the obligations of the researcher

and all signed a consent form. (The information sheet and consent form provided to participants is presented in Appendix 7). Where informal conversations took place with those involved in the observational part of the study, consent was sought before responses were used.

#### **4.8.2 Contextual sensitivity**

The presence of a researcher will inevitably affect the environment in which they operate (Burns and Grove, 2003). Every care was taken not to disrupt the working environments within which the research took place. As such, all interviews were carried out during work time where preferred, either on company premises (in a private room), or over the phone, or outside conventional hours at a participant's request. During direct and participant observation, it was made clear to all participants that the researcher could leave at any time if the researcher's presence inhibited any part of the conversation or business process.

#### **4.8.3 Data security and anonymity**

Every effort was made throughout the research process to maintain anonymity and security of data for both the participant organisations and individual participants, and this was made clear to them from the outset. For this reason no organisations or participants have been named in the research and every effort has been made to avoid making reference to participants' identifiable characteristics. Information was left out of analysis wherever it was felt anonymity would be compromised. All information provided to the researcher (recordings, lists of participant names and demographics, company data and transcriptions) was transferred onto a secure hard drive which could only be accessed by the researcher, and deleted after coding had taken place. In the text of this thesis, all quotations from interviewees are presented in italics, with information about the interviewee where appropriate and where anonymity is not compromised. The number of identifying characteristics that could be applied to participants (i.e. organisation, teleworking status, job role, gender) meant that presenting participants' quotations while maintaining anonymity was challenging. To overcome this challenge, only the pertinent information required to allow the reader a contextual understanding of the data is provided.

## **4.9 Summary**

The diverse range of job roles and varied organisational environments included in the study were selected to provide a good basis for the investigation of the proposed research questions. More specifically, they provided the opportunity to uncover interesting teleworking outcomes within different occupations where these outcomes could be affected by wider organisational conditions. Furthermore, by choosing a research approach that is underpinned by relativism, the differing interpretations of multiple parties could be assessed in a way that credits actors with constructing their own reality (Mills et al, 2003). In this way it is possible to see where realities are shared and where they are disparate to aid our understanding of how the outcomes of telework are created in a social context. The following four chapters present the empirical findings of the study. An integrated discussion of the findings and consideration of how the conditions and perspectives presented in the following four chapters interrelate is presented in Chapter 9.

## **CHAPTER 5: Telework and the Organisational Environment**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research findings which relate to the industry, organisational and job specific factors that influence the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements. In doing so, the chapter discusses the contextual factors which determined participants' perceived fit of telework with the organisation's internal and external environment and, related to this, their perceived organisational support for telework. The factors which influenced participants' perceived fit of telework were the organisations core activities, its culture, its related policies and practices, and the influence of trade unions. The chapter considers the messages conveyed by the organisation to employees regarding how telework is aligned with organisational strategy. Subsequently the chapter discusses how factors specific to employees' roles and working practices resulted in differential support for telework from within the organisations. A brief summary and conclusion are presented at the end of the chapter.

### **5.2 Where telework is a good fit; High-tech**

Telework was perceived to have the best fit with the organisational environment and therefore to benefit from the strongest organisational support, at High-Tech where telework was universally considered to enhance organisational performance. The approach to telework at High-Tech followed a consistent top management strategy which emphasised high performance, superior client service and returns on investment for shareholders. In particular, telework had been used to meet the demands of an increasingly international client base operating within different time zones. The international spread of High-Tech meant that remote collaboration tools were used by many employees to interact with colleagues, clients and other stakeholders in diverse locations. This situation led participants in High-Tech to describe telework as '*a useful tool*' and, significantly, as '*essential to the business*'. At the extreme, participants at High-Tech considered the provision and practice of telework to be a prerequisite for a wide-reaching, well-regarded

organisation within their industry. This perception is demonstrated by one technical consultant at High-Tech:

*Researcher - 'How would you feel about working for an organisation that didn't provide telework?'*

*Participant - 'I would question the company that was hiring and the way it was set up. I would think why don't you have the infrastructure to allow me to do my job? If they're not set up to enable you to work successfully do you really want to be working for that kind of company? I mean, you would have to consider how successful it will be for its customers if it can't provide that for its own staff.'* (Teleworker - High-Tech)

The need to access *unique* skills and experience for projects from diverse locations necessitated collaboration between disparate employees who described themselves as working in '*virtual teams*'. To meet the demands of this environment, telework was described as having developed '*organically*' through necessity and experience in the pursuit of innovation and the '*provision of excellent service*'. Furthermore, as collaborative technology constituted the organisation's primary merchandise, its ubiquity influenced the supply and perceived acceptability of telework within with organisation. For example, while email and phone contact were used extensively in all organisations, High-Tech had comparatively greater access to collaborative technologies including Instant Messaging (IM), groupware and videoconferencing, all of which have been shown to facilitate successful telework (Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Pearce, 2009; Watad and Will, 2003). Furthermore, employees' frequent use of these tools resulted in widespread expertise regarding their purpose and experience with their use. These products' functions capabilities and desirability were internalised and espoused by staff.

The contribution of telework towards both client satisfaction and maximising returns for investors was reflected in the content of the organisation's website which outlined the pivotal role of '*global connectivity*' in superior client service provision, efficiency and profit. Furthermore, statements from senior management such as '*Work is a thing we do, not a place we go*' featured on the website and were reinforced by the services provided



through the website itself. More specifically, a *'live web chat'* with an expert technician was immediately offered to clients who entered the site, demonstrating that customers were already connected to the organisation and its staff from their current location. In turn, employees uniformly perceived the organisation's primary motivations for telework as helping them *'deliver'* to clients by increasing clients' access to them, matching flexibility to work-flow and aiding contact and travel requirements. Furthermore employees recognised that the organisation's own products were used to provide these services and therefore that participating in telework was not only necessary to conduct their jobs, but part of *'living the brand'*.

*'Just the whole sort of ethos of High-Tech means that we just don't come into the office to work, you know, we work in an industry that facilitates communication and remote collaboration. If remote communication and collaboration didn't exist, High-Tech wouldn't.'* (Teleworker - High-Tech)

As a consequence, telework was universally accepted as a beneficial business strategy for enhancing performance. This perspective was supported by the organisation's Human Resource policies which emphasised and reinforced high performance for individual employees. To illustrate, appraisal was based on an organisation-wide system of objective targets which were linked to rewards, and, at the extreme, employment security. This approach provided a strong motivator to perform, regardless of location, and made individual employees accountable for their own successes which were rated, where possible, by internal and external clients:

*'Performance is measured with EMP, electronic performance management and your customers are the most important rater. You give evidence of where objectives have been met or exceeded and various scores are given all the way down to N which basically means you are going to be sacked [...] these overall gradings also affect your bonus.'* (Teleworker, High-Tech)

This policy of individual performance management reflected an organisational culture of *'self-reliance and individualism'* (Gainey et al, 1999: 3), which was also supported by the

recruitment and selection process. One manager explained that for both teleworkers and non-teleworkers ‘*independence*’ and ‘*self-motivation*’ were prioritised over technical skills which could be developed later, as these primary personal characteristics enabled employees to work alone from the outset. This strategy reduced the need for both close monitoring and physical socialisation into the organisation for teleworking employees and facilitated effective remote communication between employees and clients. Importantly the organisational culture and environment not only supported but necessitated teleworking because it both ‘*fit*’ with the organisation’s products and ethos and conducting it could be considered a vital component in the socialisation process itself. For example one participant described his first day at High-Tech:

*‘I arrived at the office and my immediate manager was on holiday and there was no-one from my team here. It can be daunting when you just show up to a company and you think “right, what shall I do now?” But you’re just kind of expected to get on with it and people said “well the information’s on the web, off you go!”’ (Teleworker - High-Tech)*

By enabling new recruits to ‘*hit the ground running*’ and reducing proximate supervision, guidance or peer support, telework facilitated an approach to socialisation which provided an essential element of filtering on behalf of the organisation through the self-selection of employees. One participant remarked that it was common not to ‘*cut it*’ within the culture and described how many new starters didn’t make it past the first six months. If employees did make it past this initial period successfully the company could be assured that they had recruited an ‘*independent thinker*’ suited to the role and importantly, desirable to their clients:

*‘I think the approach probably does deter people, but it also breeds an environment that is very independent. If people weren’t independent thinkers they couldn’t work for this kind of organisation as it’s that creativity and flexibility that people pay for. I know a lot of people who have left fairly quickly, which was probably for the best actually.’ (Manager - High-Tech)*

The factors outlined above resulted in prevalent teleworking within the organisation which was available to all employees unless a specific physical requirement for attendance at a particular site prevented participation. Physical role requirements for office-based working reflected prohibited teleworking at Tel-Com, discussed below. In general, participants described a '*lot of empty buildings*' which meant commuting to the office was seen as a '*waste of time*' unless meetings had been planned as most people were out of the office '*anyway*'. The accessibility of a collection of fully equipped but mostly '*empty*' buildings for employees had three consequences. First, employees considered that an office presence would neither facilitate informal interaction nor contribute to their personal visibility. Second, ubiquitous teleworking alongside the potential to work at various locations led some participants to be uncertain whether colleagues were '*official*' (referring to formal) teleworkers by contract or not as they carried out work in whichever location was most appropriate, making any distinction irrelevant. Third, the maintenance and availability of a large number of offices for employees to use at their disposal in the face of extensive teleworking communicated that teleworking was supported to enhance performance, rather than to reduce costs (discussed below). Furthermore it led participants to consider their organisation as a '*global community*' even where they rarely entered company premises.

### **5.3 Where telework is a bad fit; Local-Gov**

Telework was perceived to have the worst fit with the organisational environment, and therefore to receive the weakest organisational support, at Local-Gov. The primary factor which reduced the perceived fit of telework with the organisation environment at Local-Gov was the established public service culture within the organisation which, alongside a high concentration of customers, led to perceptions that extensive teleworking would work against customers' interests. The promise to remain local was evidenced by the content of Local-Gov's website. On its homepage the organisation described itself as '*your council*' and displayed maps and details of all buildings within the locality. It provided descriptions of local services, timings of when various services were available and profiles of local councillors. The provision of these details clearly communicated that the organisation's intention was to be physically accessible where necessary and to be publically accountable,

which sent a strong message to employees that large scale telework was not conducive to this end.

Within Local-Gov, while working at home occasionally was seen as acceptable for some senior employees conducting important or confidential tasks, extensive teleworking was considered to contravene the organisation's core values of availability and accountability to the local community in two ways. First, in contrast to High-Tech where employees inevitably worked variable hours, Local-Gov provided services within standard hours. As a public sector organisation, employees' flexibility was also restricted by the Working Time Regulations (1998). Time restrictions limited teleworking staff at Local-Gov in the amount of extra hours they could perform. Where teleworking did allow longer or irregular hours, teleworkers were required to take time off in lieu during standard business hours. Therefore a number of participants perceived that teleworkers should work standard hours to remain sufficiently available. Using telework to continue to perform standard hours was not considered to provide any additional service benefit to clients. Second, Local-Gov's day-to-day business involved the provision and management of primary services to the local area, to whom participants felt accountable. Unsurprisingly, local service provision resulted in the organisation's operations being concentrated. Consequently, not only was there no pressing business requirement to support dispersed staff, encouraging staff to become dispersed was considered to be detrimental to service provision and damaging the organisation's public image:

*'Because it's a local government organisation you're working for the local people and they're paying for it. It's not like taking money from a private organisation, these are actual people who live in the area and you're working for them [...] being a tax payer myself I wouldn't want to be paying for someone who isn't at work. How does it look if you're paying for a service and there's no one there to answer your questions?'*  
(Non-teleworker - Local-Gov)

Under-investment in the technology needed to support telework also sent a strong message that telework was an atypical, restricted practice which should be performed sparingly and only where necessary. In Local-Gov, a number of participants suggested that they were

unfamiliar with remote technical communication and collaboration. Importantly, rather than being central to the organisation's existence, these tools were procured only when 'necessary', from within a limited budget, and needed to be seen as 'appropriately' supporting staff and services for the general public. A strong, demonstrable case for technology procurement was required before more substantial investment was undertaken. Perhaps paradoxically this rendered initial investments in remote working technology insufficient to demonstrate its usefulness:

*'The initial project, erm it didn't work very well. We were given a small amount of money, very small, to get a homeworking solution up and running, so with that money we had a look at what was available. It wasn't very good. It wasn't the right way to go about it, people didn't want it and it was too complicated and there were too many issues [...] at the time that's all we could manage' (Non-teleworker, IT professional - Local-Gov)*

The conditions outlined in this section resulted in an ingrained culture of office presence among the workforce that remained pervasive despite attempts from within the organisation to expand the practice. However, four further contextual factors were identified as contributing to the unsuccessful attempts to expand telework at Local-Gov.

First, the manner in which the teleworking strategy had been formulated and implemented meant that senior management support for telework was dubious. More specifically, rather than being led by senior management, a decision to promote telework had been prescribed by central government as part of a space saving initiative to meet government targets. Also the responsibility for championing telework did not lie with senior management as it did in High-Tech, but with the Property Services department who are responsible for managing the council buildings. Some high-level property service employees became teleworkers themselves in order to champion the practice. This method of implementation indicated that telework was being supplied as part of a strategy of cost-reduction through space saving which was considered a temporary response to environmental pressures that were simply part of the economic cycle and a response that was ill-conceived and antithetical to customer needs:

*Sure we might save a few quid here and there and they are under pressure to reduce costs at the moment. I suppose it costs a lot to keep us all in here, but we provide, or we're supposed to provide a public service aren't we? That's not going to change and we're not going to be able to do it if we're not here' (Non-teleworker - Local-Gov).*

Second, a strong trade union was present at Local-Gov which had demonstrated both support for and resistance to telework in specific circumstances. On the one hand, the trade union accepted telework as a method of promoting fairness and equal opportunities in keeping with the ethos of the public sector, outlined above (Bach and Winchester, 2003) and facilitating the inclusion of vulnerable members of the workforce. The union supported provision of telework to accommodate employees' personal circumstances was both accepted and expected by participants who felt it was the organisation's '*moral responsibility*'. More specifically, accommodating employees' specific needs by supplying telework was considered to reflect a fair, supportive organisation which valued and repaid employees' commitment. This position aligned with the traditional public sector values held by most employees and led them to assume organisational support for it.

On the other hand, the trade union had successfully challenged telework as a cost-based strategy for flexibility and had successfully backed disgruntled employees who were concerned about various aspects of telework. The union stressed that it would continue to do so:

*'We strongly support employees with regards to telework as they can get a very raw deal. They are entitled to a voice, just like everyone else and we encourage that, especially if there is a danger that they are being forced to telework or it is being practised unfairly' (Trade Union Rep - Local-Gov)*

These challenges led those responsible for the implementation of telework to describe a '*culture of resistance*' to the practice within the organisation:

*'it's amazing you know, where I used to work we'd say, right, from now on, you're going to work in this way, then people would work in that way, here, you say, you are going to work in this way and they say, hang on a minute, we are going to have to consult our union representative about this! Like any job, when people are applying they're prepared to be flexible, five minutes later, suddenly they're telling you how, when and where they are prepared to work. Is it any wonder that it's difficult to get these things off the ground?'* (Manager involved in the promotion of telework - Local-Gov)

The trade union's successful prevention of involuntary telework, and ability to impose rules of fairness regarding how voluntary telework should be supplied and managed resulted in the practice being implemented more in line with the organisation's recognised core values of *'responsibility'* and *'fairness'* than the imposed space-saving targets. This successful challenge indicated and reinforced the perception that the proposed expansion of telework worked against employees' interests and that senior managers sympathised with the union's position. Following trade union consultation telework was supplied on a voluntary basis as a formal arrangement in line with union specifications which set out teleworking employees' entitlements which included parking provisions, fuel allowances and a teleworking allowance. Furthermore, in the interest of fairness the teleworking policy specified that all employees were entitled to request telework and *'suitable'* requests, if agreed by the employee's manager, would be considered and provided on a formal, *'official'* basis to ensure *'suitability'* and monitor the acceptability of the arrangement.

Third, the union requirement to provide telework voluntarily and formally in the face of a policy of space saving resulted in a disparity between employees' perception regarding the purpose of telework and the manner in which it was promoted, which led employees to question the organisation's support for telework. Those responsible for the implementation of telework were required to incentivise managers to permit, and employees to participate in, the practice voluntarily as it could not be imposed. To attract managers, policy dictated that only by providing *'official'* telework to subordinates could they access the necessary equipment for employees to telework, such as mobile phones and laptops which some managers desired for their team. The tied provision of equipment to a formal teleworking

status was also to ensure the efficient provision of teleworking equipment for those who needed it as there was *'not enough to go round'*. To persuade employees to conduct voluntary telework the initiative was marketed as a work-life balance practice. This was reflected in the teleworking policy and promotional documentation which emphasised improvements in personal flexibility. Although some staff did recognise these benefits, the majority still perceived them as incidental to the achievement of well publicised cost-savings (e.g. - Gibson and Luck, 2004):

*'They want it to be successful cos' of the accommodation strategy. The whole thing needs to work or we're in trouble aren't we? [...] I think it's cost and I suppose there is an element of wanting to increase peoples' work-life balance, but really I think it probably has more to do with cost'*  
(Non-teleworker - Local-Gov).

The discordant, and to some, disingenuous manner in which telework was presented failed to project a clear message of support for telework as a desirable strategy in itself, rather than simply *'another method'* of cost reduction. The perceptions of telework as *'just another attempt to save money'* were exacerbated by its use alongside parallel strategies of office moves, outsourcing, hot-desk arrangements for office-based teams, and a recent programme of redundancies. Regarding redundancies Local-Gov had recently made redundant some high profile teleworkers and proponents of telework as part of a *'restructuring initiative'*. Unsurprisingly, the choice of these candidates projected a message that telework and teleworkers were not highly valued. Consequently the enhanced supply of telework was perceived as central government and the property services division of the council *'pushing telework to meet their own targets'* rather than genuine support for telework itself at the expense of both client service and employees' job security.

Fourth, the Human Resource policies at Local-Gov also reinforced an office presence within the organisation. While performance was assessed against targets where possible, it was difficult to assess many roles in this manner leaving line managers to make subjective assessments of whether subordinates had developed particular competencies from witnessing their *'day-to-day'* behaviour. Furthermore, rewards were based on salary scales to promote fairness and transparency, but led to ambiguity over individuals' effort and *'hid'*



any performance issues. Consequently, office-working was considered necessary to demonstrate a *'fair'* and *'equal'* contribution and to maintain employees' competence. Regarding promotion, there was an expectation that those who *'put in the time and effort'* would rise within the established hierarchy where many could expect to remain for their entire career. However with regard to the *'effort'* required, *'visible influence'* or *'leadership'* within a team were considered to be important factors along with *'dedication to public service'* which, in the absence of sufficient tenure, was demonstrated through action and presence.

Recruitment was based on a *'cultural fit'*, with the environment and applicants were attracted by the public service ethos, outlined above, which was often felt to lead to self-selected suitability among recruits. For example one senior manager commented:

*'You have to be a particular type of person to work for a local authority, for one you have to care more about your job and the lives of those in the community than you do about what you receive for doing it. There's plenty of money to be made elsewhere if you don't'. (Senior Manager - Local-Gov)*

Appropriate socialisation was considered to be essential for reinforcing and internalising these values and inevitably occurred *'on-the-job'*. Not one participant from Local-Gov felt that telework would be appropriate for new employees and indeed all who remained on a teleworking arrangement were well established at the organisation. Consequently, while the ability to telework appeared to be a pre-requisite for *'fitting in'* to the organisational culture at High-Tech, fitting into the organisational culture appeared to be a pre-requisite for teleworking at Local-Gov.

#### **5.4 Where the fit of telework is ambiguous; Tel-Com**

The perceived fit of telework with the organisational environment and therefore the perceived level of organisational support for telework at Tel-Com were more difficult to determine than at High-Tech and Local-Gov. Like High-Tech, Tel-Com developed high-

specification tools to aid remote collaboration, meaning that such tools were abundant and technology was commonly accepted as an *'enhancing'* tool.

*'I work in a communications company don't I? Technology and using technology to work is a basic requirement of our existence' (Teleworker - Tel-Com)*

The written teleworking policy outlined a number of strategic uses for telework, including improved service provision, enhancements to employees' work-life balance, efficiency gains and corporate social responsibility fulfilment. Members of the senior management team also described how implementing telework provided public relations advantages, especially relating to sustainability, and had supported Tel-Com in becoming an employer of choice. Rather than a strong shared perception of the purpose of telework, participants perceived the organisation's motivation towards it to be whatever was most salient to their occupation:

*'I think they want us to be flexible so we can work when the client wants' (Teleworker, Sales - Tel-Com)*

*'It's a progressive organisation and they know that flexibility is important to people in managing their lives and especially family' (Teleworker, Human Resources - Tel-Com)*

*'We have a responsibility nowadays to work towards sustainability, and the company seems to take that seriously' (Teleworker, Facilities Management - Tel-Com)*

*'It helps with continuity planning' (Non-teleworker, Risk Management - Tel-Com)*

These diverse perceptions appeared to stem from disparate organisational values which were rooted in two significant changes in ownership. Tel-Com had experienced two mergers in its history, involving organisations with very different values and strategic

approaches to telework. The original organisation was similar to Local-Gov in that it valued office presence and provided telework in exceptional circumstances. After the first merger at Tel-Com, telework had been used to aid retention in some areas by increasing employees' flexibility and to reduce costs in others. With regards to cost reduction, while Tel-Com also recognised a trade union that remained sceptical of telework, the organisation had been able to impose involuntarily telework for *'suitable jobs'* for reasons of *'practicality'* or *'efficiency'* to enhance flexibility and cost savings. After the second merger, telework was presented as a strategy to facilitate service provision and enhance corporate sustainability. The result was a situation noted by van Knippenberg et al (2002) where those employed prior to the mergers identified more weakly with the organisation's current values and goals when compared with those who had joined the organisation in its current incarnation. A consequence was contrasting perceptions regarding the motivation for telework and confusion over its meaning and purpose:

*'There's this old culture with something more dynamic superimposed on the top and there is a certain pull from the old culture against expanding telework and a feeling that it should be used either when it's necessary or practical or beneficial and then a push for it from the new people coming in who consider it to be an essential way or working [...] Someone needs to look at what teleworking actually means to this organisation, and what it actually means for me to be a teleworker.'* (Teleworker - Tel-Com)

A consequence of changing and contrasting strategies towards telework at Tel-Com was that its desirability and utility within the organisation was perceived to be linked to *'fashion'*. Furthermore, the organisation's promotional material sent mixed messages of support by indicating that the organisation valued telework but wanted to retain a visible presence. For example, the company website emphasised the merits of remote collaboration for both customers and modern businesses alongside its dedication to having accessible leaders and a presence in the local community. Mixed messages were also conveyed by Tel-Com's HR policies. A company-wide system of 360 degree appraisal meant those opting to telework or permitting the practice for subordinates were required to consider its acceptability from others' points of view. Consequently, rather than a clear consistent incentive to permit or prevent telework, employees were incentivised to consider its

benefits on a case by case basis and, most usually, the strategic benefits of providing telework within particular job roles.

The focus on job-based suitability was reflected in the recruitment practices at Tel-Com where far more focus was afforded to job-specific expertise than towards a *'fit'* with the organisational culture identified at High-Tech and Local-Gov. To impart the organisation's values post-recruitment, socialisation took place at the organisation's employee *'academy'* where employees were familiarised with the organisation's celebrated *'customer focus'* which included its dedication to flexibility. However, following induction, new employees were encouraged to become familiar with the organisation's departments and products and for this reason employees were normally required to be based within the organisation for a period of time before commencing telework. The exceptions were mobile and involuntary teleworkers and some exceptional arrangements, discussed below.

## **5.5 Support for employee-led telework**

Where telework was available on a voluntary basis, perceived support for the practice was determined by its perceived contribution to organisational performance. The scope for telework to benefit organisational performance was strongly influenced by its perceived fit with the characteristics of the job roles employees performed and the prevalence of different types of jobs within the organisation. The primary factors which determined the perceived fit of telework with a job role were the skill level and the nature of interactions required to perform the role. Consideration of skill levels and required interactions revealed three broad classifications of role. These classifications were further subdivided by relevant secondary factors which are discussed below. The perceived contribution of telework to organisational performance at all three organisations was determined by the following classifications, in combination with the organisation's strategic approach to telework. These factors are discussed in the remainder of this chapter and presented in Figure 5.1.

### 5.5.1 Standardised roles – low-level, equivalent skills

Where roles required low skills and afforded limited discretion over how and when tasks were performed, little organisational benefit was evident from providing telework from the perspective of performance. ‘*Standardised*’ roles were characterised by low task discretion and work-scheduling latitude (Golden and Veiga, 2009) and, related to this, by lower status. To clarify these terms, these employees had their tasks dictated by others, in particular higher-level employees or clients, within highly-structured working days. They were rarely, if ever, required to work outside of standard hours or to take extra work home with them to meet deadlines. In fact, the need to defer to superiors often inhibited temporal flexibility. As a consequence, employees in standardised roles did not experience a pressing need to finish tasks or to service clients outside of standard hours. Furthermore, all employees in this classification described having one regular working location, and none were required to travel to different sites. As task-related flexibility and increased mobility were not required, telework provided no discernible benefit within these roles where performance was the only consideration.

Standardised roles were divided into ‘*external-standardised*’ and ‘*internal-standardised*’ roles depending on whether employees serviced internal or external clients. ‘External-standardised’ roles included call-centre operatives, sales support, customer service personnel, and lower-level fraud and security roles. Employees performing external-standardised roles were restricted to standard responses aimed at ensuring a ‘*consistent professional service*’ and were often required to work on systems which contained customers’ personal data, which was described as ‘*sensitive*’ or ‘*confidential*’. A requirement to maintain confidentiality was regarded as a condition which prohibited the supply of telework. More specifically, in line with Leonard (2001) and Peters et al (2004), accessing protected information on secure systems or files accessible only from company premises was presented as an overriding and legitimate business requirement. Participants accepted and espoused this justification:

*‘The work we do is sensitive and they are sensitive systems we use. We have sensitive documents we send out so it’s best to be from within a secure unit to be honest as we have to adhere to data protection and those*

*things, it wouldn't be appropriate for us to take it away' (Non-teleworker, external-standardised role - Tel-Com)*

However, further analysis indicated that these restrictions may be more cultural than physical. Indeed, one technical specialist remarked that significant technical improvements had overcome many confidentiality challenges. Furthermore, some lower-level employees who worked with sensitive data were required to work at home as part of the cost reduction strategy. Confidentiality concerns also seemed to preclude only lower-level employees from telework. Higher-level employees, such as managers and social workers did not perceive the same restrictions, and security concerns did not prevent them from teleworking. This was the case even when they worked with very sensitive data. However, despite these acknowledgements, confidentiality requirements, alongside the need to ensure consistency were presented by the organisation as a legitimate reason for prohibiting telework for external-standardised roles in the *'best interest of the business'* in most cases.

'Internal-standardised' roles included administrative, clerical and other internally-facing lower-level personnel with relatively low task-discretion. Within internal-standardised roles, proximate internal interactions were felt to create *'value'*. More specifically, those performing internal-standardised roles were felt to *'maintain a positive working environment'* for others and provide a *'hub'* within the organisation. For these employees, being friendly, intuitive and helpful was considered a core requirement. For example, support staff across organisations and departments shared a norm of required *'helpfulness'*:

*'I think we provide an expected point of contact for people, they know we're here, we're kind of in the middle of things so they know where to come for the gossip, who's on holiday, where the stationery is, that stuff. We can help them even if it's just making them a cup of tea when they have a meeting, we look after them' (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Local-Gov)*

The researcher gained first-hand experience of such helpfulness at all three organisations when provided with writing materials, meeting rooms, tours of facilities, equipment demonstrations, assistance with parking permits and refreshments. Seemingly such

supportive behaviour, which might constitute extra-role behaviour (Van Dyne et al, 1995) within other roles, was perceived as a basic requirement of performance for employees in internal-standardised roles. Consequently, by reducing impromptu help and assistance to internal others, teleworking was feared to increase pressure on proximate colleagues to provide such help. The perception that teleworking was unsuited to internal-standardised roles was evident in all three research organisations, and participants in numerous roles either described such roles as *'suited to the office'* or tacitly assumed they would *'be there'*. In keeping with this view, fixed desks were automatically provided for internal-standardised roles within the organisation and telework was provided only as a concession, discussed further in the following chapters.

### **5.5.2 Independent roles – high level, specialist skills**

*'Independent'* roles were *'standalone'* roles characterised by skilled *'knowledge work'*, high task discretion and, related to this, high status. These roles were considered to be intrinsically motivating, required concentration and did not necessitate the same level of monitoring and support required within standardised roles. Employees in independent roles performed variable tasks, and participants often perceived *'confinement to an office'* as counterproductive, especially where patterns of work were very unpredictable. For example, those responsible for running technical applications or implementing strategy could be on call *'24-7'* meaning that even where they were not required at sites physically, they performed related work at unconventional times. Others worked with distributed clients, sometimes in different time zones. Where employees were clients' primary point of contact or were working to pressing deadlines, there was a clear, recognised service benefit from their increased flexibility and availability. Importantly, where employees were subject to these conditions and worked from home on a voluntary basis, they often believed that they were *'doing the business a favour'*:

*'I think it's probably the kind of work that you're in when you're in property, those buildings are used 24/7. If something happens at, you know eight o'clock on a Sunday morning that's an emergency then someone has to deal with it it's not like we can do the nine-five like some others. The business benefits hugely from us working in this way, I don't*

*know how they'd manage it otherwise to be honest with you,' –*  
*(Teleworker, internal-independent role - Tel-Com)*

While formal telework was not felt to be disruptive to peer-level colleagues within independent roles, due to the limited requirement for collaborative team work, the extent to which telework could benefit performance was determined by client interactions. Again, the important distinction was whether roles were internally or externally facing. *'Internal-independent'* roles worked internally within the organisation as web designers; independent researchers; and those formulating strategy and policy in areas such as health and safety, quality and risk management. *'External-independent'* roles serviced external clients and included professional service consultants, systems architects, and supplier management personnel.

Conducting extensive telework was felt to be more acceptable for external-independent roles when compared with internal-independent roles from the perspective of performance due to external-independent roles' comparatively lower requirement for internal interaction within the organisation. The people performing external-independent roles benefitted most from displaying availability and providing enhanced services to external clients which telework facilitated. By contrast, employees in internal-independent roles were required to communicate their availability and demonstrate *'added value'* within their role to internal clients.

### **5.5.3 Collaborative teamwork – high-level complementary skills**

Employees who belonged to *'collaborative teams'* possessed high-level, complementary skills, and were collectively responsible for producing creative outputs. Membership of collaborative teams meant that regardless of client interactions, employees were required to engage in extensive collaboration with peers. While a requirement for internal collaboration could reduce the perceived support for telework as *'performance enhancing'*, especially where team members were physically concentrated, telework was considered beneficial for performance where it improved concentration and therefore productivity. In collaborative teams, tasks often required a degree of *'focus'* and being *'constantly interrupted and challenged'* by proximate team members could detract from other team members'



management of their workflow. Consequently, especially where tight deadlines were imposed telework could enable team members to '*clear the backlog*', '*get on with real work*' and dedicate time to constructive collaboration when in the office. Furthermore, telework was considered to provide necessary '*head space*', scope for creativity, focus for strategic or challenging tasks and the ability to work at more productive but unconventional times to meet deadlines.

However, while there was consensus that managing workflow and enabling focus meant '*some degree*' of voluntary telework on the grounds of performance was acceptable, the amount of telework considered acceptable for this purpose was determined by the type of information exchange required between team members. Explicit '*hard data*', such as numerical data or programming code were felt to be easier to communicate through 'learner' media (Daft and Lengel, 1984) such as email or IM than more ambiguous '*soft data*' which relate to feelings and emotions. Accurately conveying 'soft' data has been recognised to require higher socio-emotional and cognitive skills (Talavera and Perez-Gonzarlez, 2007). For those working with soft data, and who therefore relied heavily on such skills, proximity to others was considered essential for conveying information accurately and for achieving synergistic collaboration. Throughout the sample, telework was thus felt to be more acceptable for those working with '*hard*' rather than '*soft*' data.

Teams which primarily exchanged hard data worked mainly in roles associated with technology and were classified as '*technical-teams*'. Organisational support for telework within these teams was demonstrated by the organisation issuing comprehensive tools for teleworking as standard practice. Teams who exchanged primarily '*soft data*' such as marketing and advertising were termed '*non-technical teams*'. Employees working within non-technical teams generally had access to remote teleworking technologies though they were often thought to be '*insufficient*' to work from home extensively. Finally, collaborative teams were often allocated specific '*team spaces*' within the organisation. The provision of a dedicated space signalled that a certain amount of presence was desired to demonstrate membership of, and commitment to, the team. The requirement to demonstrate commitment also reduced the acceptability of formal telework within collaborative teams, discussed further in the following chapters.

## **5.6 Support for telework as a practical strategy**

Where operations were distributed and complementary expertise was present in different locations, collaborative teams sometimes worked as '*virtual teams*'. This diffuse team membership produced a sense of inevitability with regard to remoteness, even where proximate working was described as more '*suited*' to the team. Within this situation the need for employees to work remotely with colleagues from different offices '*anyway*' meant that telework made '*no difference*' to others. As environmental conditions impaired employees from working proximately with peers, organisational support for telework was felt to be assumed regardless of the tasks performed and required interactions within a role. In these conditions, the necessary tools and facilities were provided to '*make telework work*' even where it was not '*ideal*'. Similarly, where collaborative teams were involved in temporary '*project work*', their proximate colleagues within a collaborative team could change frequently and they could be required to work in different locations or professional areas of the business. As a consequence, where these employees were not classified as mobile workers (discussed below), they were generally equipped with the necessary tools to conduct their tasks from different locations, including from home, out of practicality.

## **5.7 Support for telework as a retention strategy**

The provision of voluntary '*official*' telework was considered to be acceptable where it was used as a strategy to facilitate retention, and occasionally recruitment, even where teleworking was not considered to be '*performance enhancing*' within a role. However, while the strategic benefit of negotiating formal telework to retain highly skilled employees with high labour market strength was accepted, little strategic benefit was perceived from retaining standardised roles in this manner. More specifically, the absence of recognised performance benefits from voluntary telework discussed above, alongside the ease and low cost of replacing employees with low labour market strength, reduced the acceptability of recruiting or retaining standardised employees through telework from a strategic perspective. However, within more highly skilled roles the desirability of providing formal telework differed and was often dependent on managers' approach to providing telework, discussed in the Chapter 6.

## **5.8 Roles where telework is employer-led**

### **5.8.1 Involuntary telework**

Involuntary teleworkers had their place of work entered into their employment contract as '*home*' without prior negotiation. Involuntary telework was either imposed due to inherent practicality, or as part of an organisational strategy to reduce costs through space-saving, discussed above. For example, at Tel-Com the cost-saving strategy focused on task '*suitability*' rather than '*desirability*' and, in particular, some standardised roles otherwise deemed inappropriate for voluntary telework, had been designated as '*teleworkable*' for the purpose of imposing involuntary telework.

Involuntary telework was also felt to be practical for '*mobile teleworkers*' who also had their official place of work entered involuntarily into their contract as '*home*'. Mobile workers were required to attend distributed sites, and employees' homes were considered a logical work-base for these employees as it was felt to make '*no sense*' to require them to enter the office when travelling so extensively. For example, multi-site engineers and internal company training staff serving geographically spread locations regularly spent time working within their organisation '*nomadically*' and performed their administrative or strategic tasks from home. Similarly, employees regularly required to attend external client sites, such as corporate sales staff, often worked from home between client visits. Where telework was involuntary it was considered to have '*automatic acceptability*'. More specifically, by removing employees' choice over their work location within a role, organisational support for telework within that role was '*taken for granted*'.

### **5.8.2 Roles in which telework was prohibited**

Telework was prohibited where the number of required physical interactions was too large for mobility to be a practical method of servicing clients. However there remained a requirement for proximity and it therefore '*made sense*' for clients to '*come to them*'. Obvious examples were retail sales assistants, receptionists, and some employees with concentrated internal clients, such as local facilities management. In these cases, it was considered beneficial if others '*knew where to find*' employees performing these roles at a

specified place within the organisation. Therefore, fixing these employees within company premises for part or all of their working time was considered logical. Similarly, if necessary equipment was needed constantly and was based at one site, telework was also prohibited. An example was a team who were based in a research laboratory. Finally, where telework was not imposed involuntarily for external-standardised employees it was often prohibited on the grounds of cost. The expense of maintaining a service hub inside the organisation alongside the provision of specialist teleworking equipment for these employees was not perceived to justify the returns from the perspective of either performance or retention.

Strategic use of telework within job roles								
Type of formal telework <b>Acceptable practice of teleworking</b>	Core tasks dictate location		Some core tasks can be undertaken remotely					
	Client/multiple premises	Organisation's premises	High or specialist skills				Low, general skills	
			Collaborative team		Independent		External clients	Internal clients
			Technical communication	Non-technical communication	External clients	Internal clients		
			Retention or practicality	Retention or practicality	Performance or retention	Performance or retention		
	Imposed (practicality)	Prohibited (practicality)	Extensive	Limited to Moderate	Extensive	Moderate	Limited	Limited
Job Role	Mobile	Office-based	Technical-Team	Non-Technical Team	External-Independent	Internal-Independent	External-Standardised	Internal-Standardised

Figure 5.1: Strategic use of telework within job roles

## 5.9 Summary

This chapter has considered the factors within the organisation's internal and external environments that influenced the diffusion and practice of telework. The extent to which teleworking was recognised to 'fit' with the organisation's core activities and coherent business-focused policies determined the perceived level of organisational support for telework among participants. In turn, the perceived level of organisational support for telework influenced the supply of and demand for telework within the organisations.

High-Tech demonstrates a context which was considered to be a good fit with telework. High-Tech's products, environment, organisational strategy, method of teleworking implementation and HR policies not only supported telework but necessitated it to perpetuate the organisation's culture and desired image. By contrast, at Local-Gov teleworking was considered unsuited to the organisation's purpose and industry context, and was felt to produce no tangible client benefits. Mixed messages surrounding the promotion of telework, underinvestment in technology and policies which cast teleworkers as 'deviant', created suspicion and even disdain towards telework among participants, unless used within '*special circumstances*'. At Tel-Com some complementarities, mostly relating to the suitability of the product and industry and some inconsistencies, mostly relating to strategy, policies and practices were evident. The absence of a clear organisational position on telework at Tel-Com meant that organisational support was inferred from the merits of providing telework within particular circumstances.

Where telework was imposed by company policy, organisational support was assumed to be strong and where telework was visibly prohibited, it was assumed to be absent. The strongest organisational support for voluntary telework was felt to exist for job roles where it could provide direct enhancements to performance and/or where it could help the organisation to achieve its strategic aims. The next chapter considers the role that senior managers played in influencing the strategic use of telework within the organisations and the role of lower-level managers in influencing its supply and practice among employees.

## **CHAPTER 6: Telework and Managers**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the empirical findings with respect to senior managers' and lower-level managers' (referred to as managers) responses. The chapter investigates the experiences of senior managers and lower-level managers and outlines their resultant actions towards employees within a context of telework. The chapter begins by considering the factors in the organisational environment which determined managers' expected behaviour with respect to telework. The chapter moves on to consider the ability of managers to fulfil their obligations to the organisation and their subordinates when managing teleworkers in different roles and with diverse personal circumstances. Finally, the chapter analyses lower-level managers' behaviours towards employees with respect to telework which influenced both the manner in which telework was practised and experienced by employees. A summary is presented at the end of the chapter.

### **6.2 Managers' expected behaviour**

Managers' perceptions of their own expected behaviour with regards to telework were influenced by their perceived level of organisational support for the practice. Where organisational support for telework was felt to be strong and enduring, managers not only felt it acceptable to endorse and facilitate telework but perceived doing so as '*essential*' to their own success within the organisation. Conversely, where managers perceived organisational support for telework to be weak or ambiguous they felt expected to exercise caution over the provision of telework. In these circumstances managers were wary of endorsing voluntary telework and, in particular, '*official*' telework (which participants used to describe formal telework) for fear of attracting challenges. Organisational support for telework was most often communicated by the behaviour of senior management and factors within the organisational environment. In particular, the extent to which telework was practised within the organisation influenced managers' perceptions of their expected behaviour and their anticipated experiences with respect to managing telework.

### 6.2.1 Telework as the organisational norm

Where managers perceived that senior managers recognised telework as *'performance enhancing'*, they were most likely to make telework available to subordinates. At High-Tech, managers described how senior managers participated extensively in telework which was felt to demonstrate their support and sent a clear message that telework was *'normal'*, *'acceptable'* and *'valued'* within the organisation. Managers also felt that conducting telework demonstrated the success of the company's own products at High-Tech, potentially increasing sales and ultimately producing returns for shareholders, including shareholding employees. Consequently, managers felt it was in senior managers' interest to endorse telework such that senior managers were anticipated to take a dim view of those managers who did not support it. The senior manager interviewed at High-Tech confirmed these perceptions by emphasising those managers who stood in the way of flexibility and performance *'would not be tolerated'*:

*'It's important to remember what we do in our industry. What we stand for. The (right) behaviour is demonstrated by the leader and it will create the flexible culture that organisations need to create in this day and age. I think that's very much the message that we're giving our leaders [...] I personally think when organisations don't allow, or even encourage this type of work (it) is quite an archaic way of operating and I think that it has to change [...] there will always be some of these command and control type of leaders who are not particularly keen on trusting their staff to be flexible [...] do I think I should be allowing that to happen? No I don't. Our global chief executive has said, we're moving to a much more flexible style of leadership and I would suggest that as many as 30% of our leaders aren't going to be able to make it. That in itself actually really does focus the mind of managers and encourage them to enhance flexibility.'* (Senior Manager - High-Tech)

Senior managers' overt desire to select and retain managers who were willing and able to manage telework effectively incentivised managers to demonstrate their proficiency at remote management to enhance their personal recognition:



*'This is a 'get out of the office' company and most people, including senior managers telework[...]It's seen as important to the job and the organisation and it's in our interest to do it if we want to be successful as you can't meet the needs of the clients and the business otherwise.'*  
(Manager - High-Tech)

Furthermore, the extensive distribution, travel requirements and varied workflows among employees at High-Tech meant that maintaining a high-level of office presence from many employees was considered impractical. Instead, managers described how senior managers relied on scheduled face-to-face or electronic interactions to communicate strategy and acquire information from staff. The resultant norm of online presence led managers to consider that their superiors and colleagues were *'always available'* when required. Furthermore, as colleagues were unlikely to be in the office *'anyway'* they considered this type of communication more effective than unscheduled face-to-face interaction within the office.

These conditions led managers to feel they would not be personally inconvenienced by telework which increased their willingness to support it. Furthermore, managers did not perceive teleworking to contribute to a breakdown in relationships between subordinates as the nature of their demanding environment and the prevalence of telework made limited face-to-face contact inevitable. These managers' primary concern was to establish a *'good rapport'* with subordinates, which most felt was achievable through *'sufficient contact'*, regardless of their location. Furthermore, as communication usually took place online managers felt confident that they would receive the information and feedback desired from subordinates in an environment of extensive telework. Finally, the normative acceptability of telework and the ubiquity of ICTs meant that managers considered it more likely that they would be required to *'make a case'* for restricting telework than for permitting it.

As telework was *'business as usual'* its implementation was not considered to create additional work for managers outside of their expected remit. The normative acceptability of telework meant that managers considered providing it *'officially'* or *'unofficially'* to be acceptable as it made *'no difference'* and was recognised to contribute to performance. In this organisational environment subordinates were expected to use their flexibility to *'get*

*the job done*' in accordance with targets, regardless of their personal circumstances. As work demands were high, managers also felt that telework could assist teleworkers in managing their targets around their personal life better than if employees were '*confined to the office*'.

### **6.2.2 Telework as the exception**

Where senior managers displayed a preference for office-based working, managers felt expected to avoid permitting telework. For example, managers at Local-Gov described senior management as '*dedicated*' to retaining a '*culture of visibility*' within the organisation. Managers therefore perceived that instead of encouraging formal telework to enhance employees' work-life balance, as specified in the organisation's promotional literature, telework should be provided within '*exceptional personal circumstances*'. In particular, telework was considered most acceptable where it assisted the organisation in fulfilling '*moral obligations*' to employees. This view followed from an established practice of accommodating employees with special requirements within the organisational culture more generally. However, managers also recognised that the organisation was required to reduce office space. Hence employees were entitled to request formal telework within '*suitable jobs*' and policies were in place which compelled managers to consider requests. In addition, policy, alongside union requirements and the necessity to access teleworking equipment, compelled managers to '*make a case*' for teleworking to be practised '*officially*'.

Contradictions between the attitudes and behaviour of senior management and the approach to telework specified in the organisation's formal teleworking policy created a dilemma for managers. Managers felt that subordinates considered telework to be available by policy, but that widely permitting telework exposed them as supportive of a practice which senior managers considered antithetical to business requirements. Senior managers' perceived preference for office-working was apparent when several respondents suggested that senior managers preferred to save space by imposing hot-desks for employees, rather than using formal telework. The result was a strong perception among managers that employees' office presence was desirable wherever possible:

*'I think more senior people have got very strong views against expanding teleworking. There's nervousness that official teleworkers will never come in. I think we signed up to it, but I think half-heartedly. We were being pushed to find a solution to the space issue. They feel it needs to be used sensibly to suit the organisation and we can't have everyone sitting at home, so they get around it with flexible seating.'* (Manager - Local-Gov)

Senior managers' behaviour reinforced these perceptions. One manager at Local-Gov described how senior managers used an *'open door policy'* and responded to urgent issues by *'grabbing the relevant people and getting in front of the Chief Executive'*. This behaviour demonstrated the ingrained norm of office-working which reflected the organisation's perceived purpose. It was felt strongly by senior management that, as an organisation paid for by and designed to serve the local community, employees' physical presence was heavily associated with fulfilling a requirement for public accountability:

*'It's important to get people in the office as much as possible, from an information and accountability perspective. Telework is useful sometimes, but really, when you're accountable to people you need to be here and available, people need to know where we are'* (Senior Manager - Local-Gov)

For this reason, all senior managers said they could *'never be a teleworker'* and believed that formal telework was inappropriate to their own position. Managers espoused similar perceptions by explaining that there should be *'somebody accountable in the office at all times'*. A consequence was that where managers were required to be away from the office, even for short periods, office-based subordinates served as a proxy for their presence and a conduit for their authority. Related to this, many managers felt that the greater the office presence within their team the greater their own visibility and status, even if they sometimes chose to telework. In particular, for managers working within the established hierarchy at Local-Gov, allowing subordinates to telework required them to forfeit their *'earned privilege'* of respect and authority:

*'People know my team and who I am and I like that...and it's because we are here isn't it? If your team aren't here people don't know who you are. You don't get the same respect or attention from people. I worked hard to get to this level and I have earned the respect that comes with that.'*  
(Manager - Local-Gov)

The pervasive culture of office presenteeism, defined as 'the tendency to stay at work beyond the time needed for effective performance of the job' (Simpson, 1998:1), limited managers' exposure to telework. A lack of exposure led to managers' anxiety over '*not knowing how*' to manage telework and a related preference for retaining staff in the office. Most managers in this environment felt that retaining their team in the office and remaining in the office themselves enabled them to display their dedication to and ability at supervising subordinates to more senior management. Consequently, permitting subordinates to telework prevented these managers from displaying their effort at supervision.

A related consequence was that managers feared teleworking subordinates' performance failings may be more attributable to their neglectful supervision if they permitted them to telework. As telework was the exception and managers were required to grant it '*officially*', their requirement to '*make a case*' for telework was considered an undesirable addition to their workload. Alongside the threat of stigmatisation and anxieties over subordinates' performance, this additional workload made telework both personally and professionally undesirable for managers in most cases. Consequently managers exercised caution over selecting teleworkers to avoid the '*risk*' of permitting unsuccessful arrangements which, in the face of union support, they felt could be irrevocable. Cautious selection made permitting performance-enhancing telework particularly problematic for managers who felt required to engage in '*difficult conversations*' with untrustworthy or less capable subordinates, to explain why they were not permitted to telework:

*'no-one wants to have to tell their staff that they don't trust them, not just to work, but to be able to perform outside of the office environment'*  
(Manager - Local-Gov)

In order to avoid having to distinguish between employees in a way that could be perceived as reflecting their own subjective opinions of a subordinate's character and ability, some managers avoided permitting telework by suggesting that it did not provide performance benefits within their team. A preferable solution for managers was to provide telework for '*good reasons*' which generally equated to subordinates' personal needs, discussed below. The exception was for some senior employees in property services to whom managers permitted telework as these employees had already '*proved their worth*' and because their job involved '*championing*' teleworking to help meet targets.

### **6.2.3 Telework and 'situational suitability'**

Where senior management support for telework was ambiguous, managers looked for justifications for their chosen approach. This was most obvious within Tel-Com, where managers considered senior managers' commitment to voluntary telework to be uncertain. A number of managers felt that, as members of a Telecommunications organisation, teleworking was a means of displaying the company's own products and was therefore suited to the industry. Other managers focused more strongly on the suitability of telework within subordinates' job roles and personal circumstances, discussed below. Managers felt that some senior managers considered voluntary telework to enhance performance for '*suitable*' roles or task. However, they also felt required to permit telework '*within reason*' to assist employees' flexibility, aid skill retention or to accommodate the exceptional personal needs of valued employees.

The overriding perception among managers was that telework needed to suit the needs of the business and accommodate the individual as best as possible. However, while senior managers endorsed telework for numerous strategic reasons, managers considered that senior managers' own participation in telework was restricted and that they personally maintained an office presence. One manager described how senior managers and the CEO walked around the organisation to demonstrate their availability to staff, display their commitment to '*knowing what's going on*' and to appear '*approachable*'. This was reflected in recent changes to the design of the head office where the CEO's desk had been moved '*out onto the floor*' to a prominent location. Although the placement of the desk was largely a symbolic gesture, it sent a strong message that top management valued awareness of and

physical involvement with employees' working lives. A consequence was that managers felt required to maintain a certain level of presence in return:

*'I think it comes down to perceptions [...] they don't mind telework, but you know if people aren't around then senior managers think they're not able to communicate and raise issues, questions etc. And in certain circumstances they want to say well, we're trying to make people visible and involved and I don't want to turn up as the head of an organisation on a Friday and no one is around, it's not going look good on me and my influence' (Manager - Tel-Com)*

Senior managers' office presence signified to managers that conducting 'official' or extensive 'unofficial' telework should be avoided for those who wished to progress into the upper echelons of the organisation. However, their endorsement of telework also led managers to feel that 'unofficial' telework was generally considered to enhance performance and that permitting it 'when required' to this end was acceptable and sometimes desirable. Furthermore, a number of managers felt that the office presence of related roles and, in particular, standardised roles could serve as a sufficient proxy for the presence of their team. Using others' as proxies for their presence allowed managers and their subordinates to acceptably conduct a 'reasonable amount' of telework without appearing 'absent' to senior managers. For example:

*'We're very flexible, but the PAs who support the team are always here. That's where home is, unless there's a reason to be somewhere else. That's where people are most likely to find someone from our lot when they're in and where people will come if they need us or need to let us know something because even if we're not here, the PA's can deal with it in the first instance.'* (Manager - Tel-Com)

What constituted a 'reasonable amount' of telework to enhance performance depended on the context of subordinates' job roles. As employees' circumstances could differ widely, to ensure a workable and desirable arrangement it was generally considered that voluntary agreements were 'best reached by an individual and their manager'. Managers' ability to

provide *'unofficial'* telework meant they perceived little *'risk'* in allowing it to enhance performance and/or afford subordinates some personal flexibility at their discretion where they felt it was *'appropriate'*. However, as sufficient flexibility through informal telework was available to employees to enhance performance, managers assumed those requesting *'official'* telework were doing so to improve or accommodate their non-work life. Where subordinates were looking to make lifestyle improvements by guaranteeing their flexibility, managers could question subordinates' commitment which deterred them from permitting telework without *'good reason'*, discussed below. The exception was where managers felt that a formal arrangement was *'practical'* and would make *'no difference'* to others.

### **6.3 Suitability of telework within subordinates' roles**

Managers at all three organisation frequently described generic behaviours that they associated with *'being a good manager'*. As well as protecting their own and the organisation's performance, these included: ensuring staff received appropriate direction and the tools to conduct their work; *'knowing what makes staff tick'* in order to motivate them; helping to protect subordinates' well-being in the face of personal and professional challenges; easing tensions between subordinates where necessary; *'being available'* to subordinates and superiors when required; and providing adequate learning and development for subordinates. If managers felt they could adequately fulfil these obligations for subordinates in a teleworking context, they considered telework to be more acceptable than where they could not. Managers' ability to fulfil these responsibilities within a context of telework and their own experiences of this, were heavily determined by the 'type' of job roles subordinates performed. This section outlines managers' perceived suitability of telework in different job roles and discusses the effect of these perceptions on managers' propensity to offer telework.

#### **6.3.1 The effect of telework on subordinates' autonomy and managers' trust**

Managers perceived telework to be more acceptable where they felt able to trust subordinates. A previous *'betrayal of trust'* had left some managers feeling that they had been *'taken advantage of'*. Others believed unsatisfactory performance from teleworking

subordinates could be unintentional, resulting from the absence of close supervision. Consequently, managers preferred to permit telework for subordinates within roles where they felt performance was not dependent on their own presence.

Managers maintained the consistent outputs required within standardised roles by observing subordinates' behaviour to ensure their adherence to prescribed practices. When atypical situations arose, these managers were often required to authorise proposed action before it was taken and to ensure changes to standard practice were understood and performed correctly. Because of this, they felt accountable for their subordinates' performance on a continuous basis. As standardised tasks were often considered unengaging, managers feared subordinates may become easily distracted whilst teleworking and therefore that by allowing telework they were neglectful of this responsibility. Furthermore, the absence of recognised performance benefits from teleworking within these roles (discussed in Chapter 5) led managers to perceive that telework had been requested by subordinates to enhance their lifestyle. The perception that employees performing standardised roles wished to telework to improve their lifestyle enhanced managers' fears that teleworkers' performance may suffer if productivity was not their subordinate's *'priority'*. Finally, as managers of standardised roles perceived themselves to be responsible for *'keeping an eye'* on staff, *'ironing out problems'*, and *'dealing with'* non-standard situations, they also felt required to remain in the office personally. These factors weakened managers' perceived acceptability of telework for both subordinates and themselves within standardised roles.

Managers of employees in independent roles and collaborative teams had comparatively greater confidence than those managing standardised roles in providing subordinates with task-based autonomy due to their subordinates' higher skill levels. However, in general, managers of collaborative teams still recognised the benefit of *'hands-on'* management for subordinates for two primary reasons. First, managers felt that enhanced decision-making within collaborative teams was the product of synergistic interactions. Consequently, although close supervision was not always considered necessary from the perspective of task performance, managers often felt required to observe and facilitate their teams' interactions to ensure they remained productive. Second, despite feeling confident of individuals' capabilities, managers of collaborative teams felt responsible to subordinates



for ensuring sufficient effort from all team members, especially if rewards were tied to team performance.

The potential for *'free-riding'* was of greatest concern for managers of non-technical teams. Managers of non-technical teams felt that performance assessment could be subjective and placed emphasis on physical participation in and displayed influence over the *'creative process'*. These factors weakened managers' perceived acceptability of telework in non-technical teams. By contrast managers of technical teams described feeling able to identify team members' contributions often from their technical outputs and their online discussions and considered individuals' performance assessment to be *'inherently objective'* or visible. Objective measurement enabled managers to monitor employees' capabilities and prevent team members from *'free-riding'*, by putting in less effort than if measured individually. Managers therefore considered telework to be more acceptable for subordinates within technical teams.

Managers' approach to supervision in independent roles was described as *'hands-off'* for two reasons. First, limited peer-level collaboration reduced the capacity for subordinates to *'free-ride'* on others' efforts. Second, as subordinates were employed as *'experts'* managers had *'no issue'* trusting their capabilities and felt that providing autonomy and flexibility enabled them to direct their skills creatively in the best interests of the organisation. Consequently, so long as managers provided appropriate tools and conducted high-level monitoring they perceived themselves as fulfilling their obligations to subordinates and the organisation. For this reason managers did not feel personally required to remain office-based to constantly monitor subordinates' behaviour:

*'I'm a great believer in delegating responsibility. My role is more like the conductor of the orchestra rather than trying to be first violin, sitting among the violins trying to conduct things from there. My point is that I sometimes have to be up the front but they know how to play the instruments better than I do so I need to let them play'* (Manager of external-independent roles - Tel-Com).

The respective ease and difficulty of on-going performance assessment within external and internal-independent roles strengthened managers' perceived acceptability of telework within these roles from the perspective of performance. To clarify, the primary performance indicators in external-independent roles were providing '*good service*' and '*added value*' from the perspective of external clients which provided managers with an objective measure of performance through client feedback. Internal-independent employees' roles were generally designed to '*add value*' within the organisation and such objective measures of performance were often unavailable. Assessment for internal-independent roles entailed monitoring achievements against broad brush objectives set within long timelines or comparing the outcomes of an initiative against industry benchmarks. These subjective measures made close monitoring challenging or even futile.

### **6.3.2 The effect of telework on subordinates' communication**

Those managing standardised roles, non-technical teams and some internal-independent roles placed primary emphasis on daily office interactions for communication and '*knowing what was going on*' and less emphasis on formal meetings. Managers felt that being able to '*grab who they needed*' when necessary was beneficial for accurately conveying information and relaying decisions. Where this was not possible, '*face-to-face*' meetings were managers' preferred tool for ensuring sufficient contact both with and between subordinates. Managers described how '*dialling in*' to meetings could be awkward for employees performing internal-standardised roles who were unused to such collaboration. They also feared it could stifle the '*creative flow*' for non-technical teams and that those in internal-independent roles who were required to influence others and lead initiatives could '*lose authority*' and look '*uncommitted*' to their projects. Managers also felt that as these roles were more about '*people not processes*', asynchronous communication, and email contact in particular, which was '*unclear*' and '*time-consuming*' should be discouraged in favour of synchronous communication, such as phone calls. Still, even where teleworkers who performed these roles attended meetings physically and used phone calls, managers still perceived that teleworking employees '*missed out*' on important day to day interactions in the office.

Managers perceived telework to be more acceptable in roles where communications and meetings were conducted normatively and efficiently online. Therefore telework was more acceptable for external-independent roles and members of technical teams and where conditions necessarily led to subordinates being distributed.

### **6.3.3 The effect of telework on subordinates' well-being**

In some circumstances managers felt that teleworking could detract from subordinates' well-being through isolation. This concern was greatest for managers of internal-standardised roles as subordinates did not require frequent interaction with peers or clients. Furthermore, some managers felt subordinates benefitted from their own or peers' emotional support, particularly where they performed roles involving frontline service work. Those managing these roles preferred to remain office-based to support their staff emotionally with the perceived level of required support dependent on the nature and extent of '*emotional labour*' and/or the level of '*challenge*' subordinates were likely to experience:

*'Sometimes they need a sounding off. I just had a session with a couple of my deputies today who have a horrendous case, it's an abuse case and they're constantly challenged on their decisions. They've a good grip on it but just kind of wanted to double check it all with me, so I spent 45 minutes with them and that wouldn't have been as effective over the phone. That's why I limit my time at home: I need to be here for them'*  
(Manager of non-technical team - Local-Gov)

Where managers perceived subordinates to have a greater need for emotional support they perceived telework to be less acceptable, both for subordinates and themselves.

As frequent, proximate emotional support was not considered a requirement for subordinates performing independent roles and those within technical professions generally, managers felt telework would not detract from these subordinates' well-being. A greater concern was subordinates' drive to perform which, in the unstructured environment of telework, could lead to overwork. However, while managers felt that '*putting systems in place*' could alleviate overwork, unpredictable workflows and ubiquitous remote working

technologies made overwork inevitable, and enforcing office-attendance was considered ineffective in preventing it. In this circumstance, telework was presented by managers as a form of support, enabling subordinates in challenging jobs to take '*downtime*' when available. In short, providing telework within inherently challenging roles was not only considered acceptable for enhancing employees' performance, but provided a way of managing these inherent challenges. Consequently, managers believed that providing telework was an essential means of fulfilling their requirement to maintain subordinates' well-being in the face of overwork.

#### **6.3.4 The effect of telework on subordinates' relationships**

If managers feared that their whole team could be deemed '*suitable*' for telework and therefore were compelled to telework as part of a cost-saving initiative, they were most concerned about telework leading to relationship deterioration through enforced distance. Managers perceived external-standardised roles as most likely to be classified in this way which deterred them from supporting subordinates' requests to telework. Furthermore, the potential for retaliation from subordinates who did not wish to telework not only reduced managers' propensity to allow telework, but led them to consider requests for telework as unacceptable and inconsiderate.

Managers of internal-standardised roles and some non-technical teams felt that the limited number of '*teleworkable*' tasks within these roles potentially led to perceived inequity among subordinates, if telework were permitted, in two related ways. First, a need for '*cover in the office*' meant that telework would not be available for all. Second, non-teleworkers may become '*overburdened*' with reactive tasks. These anticipated outcomes contributed to managers' perceptions that telework was unacceptable within internal-standardised roles. Within non-technical teams, the potential to '*free-ride*' led managers to anticipate perceptions of inequity and conflict among team members. Managers of non-technical teams also felt required to mediate inevitable '*creative conflicts*' between subordinates. For example, one manager of a team within strategic marketing described having to manage the '*big personalities*' both attracted to and essential within the profession. For subordinates in non-technical teams to both participate in the creative process and avoid dysfunctional conflict, managers considered office attendance and

proximate working to be essential. However, managers recognised that performing telework could enable subordinates within non-technical teams to concentrate on specific tasks. Providing telework was therefore felt to be acceptable where it reduced the likelihood of conflicts by reducing unwanted interruptions between subordinates.

Managers of technical teams did not anticipate that telework would lead to conflict between subordinates. The reason was that subordinates within these roles exchanged hard, unambiguous, easily communicable data, produced relatively distinguishable contributions and were adept at remote collaboration. Furthermore, managers sometimes considered ‘*online*’ discussions to be preferable for subordinates within these roles as they provided a clear and permanent record of discussions. For example:

*‘We sometimes have a discussion on IM. It gets a bit hectic, but at least it’s all down there. In meetings people talk over each other and it’s the person who shouts the loudest, not necessarily the one with the best solution who gets noticed. You may still miss stuff if you’re typing but it’s all down there and all you have to do is read it back. If something needs clarifying we can go to a call or something, but it’s good to have it down there’ (Manager of technical-team - Tel-Com).*

The low potential for conflict contributed to managers’ perceptions that telework was acceptable within technical teams. However, managers also felt that subordinates expected a ‘*hub*’ to remain within the organisation and felt that encouraging subordinates to demonstrate ‘*sufficient commitment*’ to the team by attending the office ‘*enough*’ was necessary to maintain relationships.

Finally, the potential for conflict among subordinates seemed least concerning to managers of independent roles for two reasons. First the independent nature of tasks reduced collaboration required between subordinates which prevented both misunderstandings and non-teleworkers from becoming overburdened by ‘*picking up the slack*’ for teleworking colleagues. Second, as the majority of tasks were deemed ‘*teleworkable*’, telework was considered to be open to all and the need for ‘*cover in the office*’ was reduced along with any perceived inequity between subordinates over access to telework. This low potential for

conflict generally led managers to perceive that formal telework was acceptable within independent roles.

#### **6.3.5 The effect of telework on subordinates' learning and development**

Missed developmental learning, knowledge acquisition and impaired career progression for subordinates were common concerns for managers. These concerns were most apparent for managers of standardised roles who felt responsible for conveying prescribed practices to subordinates during socialisation, and subsequently relaying updated task-related information to them on a continual basis. Furthermore, these managers felt that teleworkers missed valuable '*incidental*' learning and a greater '*understanding of the overall business*' derived from witnessing the '*normal way*' others conducted their work. Teleworking was also feared to reduce essential internal networking opportunities for employees within standardised roles, and especially for those within external-standardised roles for whom managers perceived '*no clear career path*'. Finally, managers felt that only some tasks within internal-standardised roles were suited to telework. Dividing appropriate tasks between teleworkers and non-teleworkers was anticipated to reduce skill variety for both teleworkers and non-teleworkers. These factors contributed to the low perceived acceptability of telework among those managing standardised roles.

Managers of non-technical teams were less prescriptive of subordinates' behaviour but considered themselves to be '*coaches*'. These managers believed that subordinates in non-technical teams should remain office-based to receive optimal learning and enhanced career success as they benefitted from immediate, opportunistic and '*constructive feedback*' from their manager and from each other. These managers suggested that the difficulty of coaching and monitoring teleworkers within non-technical teams reduced their confidence in fielding important or urgent tasks to them.

*'I suppose you do give the office workers the critical tasks, you know they have the grasp of it and you can make sure they're done. I mean, people might think you were irresponsible otherwise and I tend to give the teleworkers more teleworking-type tasks.'* (Manager of non-technical-team - Local-Gov)

As appropriate tasks for teleworking were most usually considered to be those requiring limited creative interaction, managers feared that teleworking subordinates could end up '*operating in silos*' resulting in both social and professional isolation. These factors contributed to managers' low perceived acceptability for extensive telework for '*ambitious*' subordinates in non-technical teams.

Managers of technical teams felt that their own and subordinates' proficiency with technology enabled sufficient contact and feedback between them to support learning and they considered working with the technology itself to be a valuable learning exercise for subordinates. However, these managers often still considered a period of socialisation within the organisation to be essential for new employees. In particular, they felt that physical presence was needed most at the beginning of subordinates' tenure to enable them to '*learn how the team and organisation worked*' and assist with future collaboration.

Finally, managers of independent roles felt that telework did not affect subordinates' development as these employees' specialist skills were often developed through external training courses or simply by '*finding solutions*' through information exchange with colleagues or professional networks when required. Consequently '*micro-management*' was considered unnecessary and unhelpful as employees should be '*independent learners*', making the most of learning opportunities by being given the space to learn how to overcome their challenges creatively:

*'They are specialised and very resourceful. Really they just get on and solve problems like they're supposed to and there's nothing to be gained from me interfering [...] they are more capable of finding the answers themselves.'* (Manager of external-independent roles - High-Tech)

However, managers differed in their approach to socialisation between external and internal independent roles. More specifically, managers of external-independent roles felt that appropriate socialisation could be achieved through employees conducting telework as they were keen to instil a '*culture of independence*' and wanted employees to '*hit the ground running*' with clients. Conversely, managers of internal-independent roles, who worked within the internal organisation, emphasised the importance of internal socialisation to

*'learn how the organisation works'*. However, the ability to learn independently enhanced managers' perceptions of the acceptability of telework within independent roles.

#### **6.3.6 The creation of teleworking norms within job roles**

Overall, managers perceived voluntary telework as most acceptable within independent roles and technical teams. The higher normative acceptance of telework within these roles led managers to anticipate few challenges when they decided to permit telework, which alleviated concerns that they would be stigmatised for either permitting telework or conducting it themselves. More specifically, where telework was prevalent the availability of office-based substitutes for their team members and themselves was reduced which prevented them from being *'bypassed'*. Furthermore, there were fewer non-teleworkers to overburden which reduced the threat of backlash. The outcome was that effective remote working processes were established and utilised out of necessity to field tasks to teleworkers. The result was a virtuous circle of improved remote communication, positive perceptions of telework among managers, and the normative acceptance and appreciation of telework within independent roles and technical teams.

Within proximately located non-technical teams managers perceived only occasional teleworking to be acceptable. Managers also considered teleworking unacceptable within standardised roles. A normative office presence was therefore evident for both role types. This often led managers to perceive that personally opting to telework would overburden peers with their subordinates' queries and result in them personally being bypassed by subordinates and colleagues. Where these factors inhibited managers from teleworking they also reinforced office-based working for the entire team as it meant they remained *'used to'* working proximately with others. As a result these managers often enjoyed the *'banter'* and *'high-jinks'* in the office and felt they would personally *'miss'* teleworking subordinates.

Where telework was uncommon, systems to support remote communication were often perceived to be inadequate. Allowing telework could therefore detract from managers' ability to acquire valued information and receive feedback from staff. In particular, managers described how observing subordinates in their work helped them to stay *'in touch'* with customers, products or services. For example, managers of external-



standardised roles described being called upon to *'deal with'* elevated client complaints and felt that knowledge of previous customer handling and customer feedback, demonstrated and relayed by subordinates, were vital tools for managing these situations. Others appreciated *'bottom-up'* feedback from staff concerning internal company needs. Still others appreciated subordinates introducing them to office-based contacts and considered staff to be their *'eyes and ears'* keeping them informed of office gossip. Overall, a normative office presence within standardised roles and non-technical teams led managers to fear negative personal and professional outcomes from supporting telework. These factors encouraged managers to remain office-based and retain subordinates within the office to maintain the advantages of proximate working. The result was a vicious circle where telework was considered unacceptable and was therefore poorly supported.

#### **6.4 Subordinates' personal circumstances**

Providing formal telework to subordinates was considered acceptable to enhance their non-work flexibility within two identified circumstances. First, was to accommodate valued employees with a personal need. Where subordinates' continued employment was reliant on their ability to telework, managers felt they placed sufficient value on teleworking not to *'jeopardise the arrangement'* by behaving inappropriately. Subordinates' need for guaranteed flexibility in these circumstances often led managers to perceive the provision of *'official'* telework on previously agreed days to be acceptable, with the number of days permitted determined by the amount of *'teleworkable'* tasks within the role.

Second, managers felt that mitigating skill shortages for the organisation warranted a *'reasonable accommodation'* for subordinates which strengthened the acceptability of negotiating an *'official'* teleworking arrangement. Sometimes a combination of both needs and retention were considered, especially with regards to women. For example, some managers suggested that telework was of *'great benefit'* to women who often *'struggled'* to manage their family demands alongside work. However, it is notable that where subordinates did *'choose to restrict'* their availability to the organisation by opting for an *'official'* teleworking arrangement, managers often perceived them to be *'less committed'*

to their team or organisation than those who teleworked '*unofficially*' in order to enhance their flexibility.

## **6.5 Managers' responses to telework**

Unlike other stakeholders within a teleworking arrangement, managers had some control over the provision, performance and continuation of an arrangement. This control was derived from their legitimate managerial authority and ultimate responsibility for subordinates' performance, which determined their own performance and professional outcomes. Managers were more comfortable permitting telework where they felt it would not detract from their personal experiences of work and where they felt they could adequately fulfil the obligations within their role. However, despite their '*management prerogative*' going some way to legitimising their preferred approach towards telework, support for telework, either internal or external to the organisation, could sometimes constrain their behaviour.

Managers' beliefs about telework could also change. Some managers who had initially sanctioned telework later wished to revoke it when it became undesirable. The desire to revoke telework followed from their experiences of the arrangement, changes in the nature of an employee's job or personal circumstances and/or changes in the organisational or economic environment. Finally, a number of managers described '*inheriting*' teleworking subordinates which could compel them to operate outside of their '*preferred style*' of management. Managers were then inclined to attempt to alter their subordinates' working practices to make them more acceptable to their own personal management style.

Finally, a number of managers admitted having been reluctant to manage teleworkers, but had '*learned*' to manage the practice and had eventually become supportive of it. Some had been compelled to use telework to overcome environmental constraints such as a high distribution of staff, subordinates' required mobility, skill shortages, or short-term impediments to office-working, such as office refurbishment or severe weather. Additionally, some managers had been unsuccessful in terminating teleworking arrangements, due to strong opposition, and after a period of time had '*got used to*' it.

Finally, there were several cases where subordinates had managed to persuade sceptical managers of their trustworthiness and the merits of the arrangement by enacting '*good teleworking behaviours*' as outlined above.

An examination of managers' responses to telework revealed four categories of behaviour which they displayed towards teleworkers. These responses are described in the remainder of this section.

#### **6.5.1 Support and facilitation**

Where organisational support for telework was strong, managers who were inclined to support telework for subordinates did so in four ways. First, managers emphasised the need to arrange social time with teleworkers '*going to them*' where necessary as they considered '*establishing and maintaining a rapport*' and '*ensuring open communication*' with and between subordinates as vital to good management. These managers took responsibility for being '*approachable*', '*available*' and for providing '*clear objectives*' and '*timely information*' to teleworkers through '*planned communication*'. Where supportive managers had inherited teleworkers, they emphasised the need to '*get to know staff*' and to '*make the extra effort*' to learn how they liked to be managed, such as focusing on results rather than seeking constant feedback. Furthermore, supportive managers involved non-teleworkers in the planning and scheduling of tasks, consulted them about the effect of telework on their own performance and made telework available to non-teleworkers where feasible.

Second, the recognised reduction in physical interaction between subordinates in environments characterised by extensive teleworking often led supportive managers to supplement virtual meetings with mandatory physical meetings. However, rather than requiring teleworkers to attend frequent '*last minute*' meetings, these were planned in advance, scheduled infrequently and could take place over one or two days' duration. This design enabled extensive information to be provided from various parts of the business, reduced the need for supplemental meetings and provided an extended, but intense interaction with and between subordinates, which facilitated social bonding. To illustrate:

*'The team experienced a succession of diverse interactions over the day. They moved from formal development issues, including sensitive personal performance discussions with their manager to lunch where the same issues were discussed informally between peers. Here peers provided support, aligned opinions and formed coalitions, planning how they were going to act collectively in anticipated situations later in the day. Following lunch, they received presentations from internal IT and finance representatives and visiting suppliers. During these presentations the team appeared to verbally and non-verbally communicate their feelings to each other, at times making faces or scribbling messages on scraps of paper. The social experience that took place over post-meeting drinks was enhanced by these earlier interactions as subordinates collectively communicated their previously 'agreed-upon' opinions to their manager through light-hearted banter. These shared, focused, intense experiences resulted in a feeling that the team had been through a lot since this morning and seemed more unified for doing so.'* (Field note - sales team meeting - Tel-Com) (Field notes from the meeting are presented in Appendix 3)

One major benefit of these meetings for managers was that subordinates were provided with equal information *'at the same time'* preventing them from feeling left out and enabling any misunderstandings to be resolved collectively as they occurred.

Third, supportive managers prevented overwork and promoted recognition based on performance for subordinates. For example, one manager implemented a policy that emails should be not sent after six o'clock in the evening unless urgent. If urgent communication was required, a summary was sent by text, preventing employees from having to monitor emails to avoid *'missing something'*. However, this strategy appeared to be primarily aimed at preventing non-teleworkers from feeling expected to work to *'teleworkers' timelines'*. Other supportive managers helped teleworkers to take *'down time'* when possible. Still others delegated tasks by assigning them to subordinates with the greatest spare capacity, rather than proximity. Furthermore, supportive managers *'made achievements visible'* to

senior managers on behalf of subordinates and promoted subordinates based on merit rather than location and visibility.

Fourth, supportive managers described specifically recruiting subordinates with the attributes perceived to be a good *'fit'* with effective remote working, sometimes prioritising these qualities over relevant skills and experience:

*'You kind of want someone you can plug in. We have a lady in Italy who was perfect and you think she has the right attitude, smart, not necessarily technically but that doesn't matter as much because we can train her. You have to ask, are they independent and hard working? Have they got the right attitude? Are they at least broadly familiar with the technology? You could train people to do the job, but you really need the right attitude.'* (Manager of external-independent roles - High-Tech)

Strategic recruitment was often accompanied by strategic socialisation for new employees. One manager described how socialisation was like *'speed dating'* as he required new staff to spend a short, but focused amount of time with each teleworker to get to know them. This intense interaction was often coupled with immersion into a teleworking context which served to both socialise new hires into enacting preferred behaviours and encouraged those with contrary perceptions or behaviours to exit the group. Some managers used this as a *'filtering process'* where attraction-selection-attrition processes (Schneider, 1987) resulted in the norms of the group and its preferred composition becoming established and perpetuated.

Importantly, where managers considered telework to be acceptable they felt confident that non-teleworking subordinates would support the practice. Where non-teleworkers were considered unsupportive, managers felt vindicated in supporting their teleworking subordinate and even taking disciplinary action against those who obstructed telework.

### 6.5.2 Appeasement and concealment

Where organisational support for telework was perceived to be weak and managers felt expected to exercise caution over the provision of telework, those who were sympathetic towards permitting telework tried to accommodate it in two ways.

First, some managers avoided what they perceived as *'inevitable challenges'*, especially from peers and seniors by *'hiding'* telework. They felt that by allowing telework but encouraging subordinates to conduct it in a clandestine manner they were protecting themselves and teleworkers from criticism and stigmatisation while still providing subordinates with desired flexibility:

*'I've wanted to allow people in my team to be homeworkers when they've requested it and my boss blocked it. He says they must have a physical place of work within (Tel-Com). Now I've got around that very easily by saying the nearest (Tel-Com) store is their working location so in fact I've got some people that, I know they're working from home, but as far as the company are concerned, they have an office [...] my manager just has this strange view about teleworkers. He thinks they're contributing less and that I shouldn't let them. But I let them get on and telework so long as they keep their head down' (Manager of non-technical team - Tel-Com)*

However, hiding telework could be problematic for three reasons. First, it was only possible to *'hide'* telework if the subordinates' role was not highly visible. For example, where standardised employees were positioned in one place during business hours their absence was noticeable, preventing managers from using this strategy. Second, it was usually only possible to *'hide'* informal teleworking arrangements which prevented guaranteed flexibility for the employee, the acquisition of homeworking allowances and, if its provision was tied to a formal teleworking status, necessary equipment. Third, the continuance of a *'hidden arrangement'* was often dependent on the sustained manager-subordinate relationship, making teleworking vulnerable to a change of management. Consequently, *'hidden arrangements'* were both inherently unstable and often unavailable.

Second, where appeasing managers were unable or unwilling to *'hide'* telework, they expounded the virtues of teleworking and teleworking subordinates to others in an attempt to appease those with negative opinions. To prevent perceptions of inequity and retain flexibility, some managers consulted non-teleworkers about others' telework and attempted to ensure that office cover would be shared equally by *'dividing up'* telework. In one example a manager explained that she knew how much telework was suitable, so allowed a certain amount of teleworking time per week to be *'divided up among subordinates themselves'*. Furthermore managers often felt that providing formal telework on a part-time basis with floating *'teleworking days'* could safeguard work-directed flexibility, appeasing critics to some extent.

To alleviate fears of an altered working environment, appeasing managers tried to minimise disruption emphasising that subordinates would *'retain their area'*. However, this was sometimes challenging for managers who feared that *'orders from above'* may prevent them from keeping their promise. Where retaining an area was not possible, one manager explained that she was *'very vocal'* about the benefits of telework, emphasising to her team that it would enable them to access new equipment which would increase their efficiency and performance. Another promoted the benefits of hot-desking to her subordinates, explaining that it enhanced networking and potentially improved their performance and career prospects.

When *'making a case'* for teleworking for individual subordinates, managers emphasised subordinates' demonstrated commitment and personal suitability for teleworking. For example, individuals who had advanced in their career were presented as having proven their dedication to their job and proficiency at their tasks and were assumed to demonstrate *'good teleworker behaviour'*. Invariably, *'good teleworker behaviour'* entailed *'putting the needs of the business first'*, *'not imposing flexibility on others'*, *'performing'*, *'communicating'*, *'being contactable'* and importantly *'coming in regularly'* and always when required. To illustrate:

*'She is very dedicated. In fact, I tell her I don't trust her not to look at her Blackberry all the time when she's at home (laughs). She was signed off*

*sick once after an operation and I demanded that she leave it in the office, she's always working that one.'* (Manager, non-technical team - Tel-Com)

By suggesting a willingness to go beyond requirements, even to the detriment of her own health, the manager cultivated the image of the 'workaholic' subordinate from whom performance could be expected, regardless of location. Furthermore, a clear but indirect message was simultaneously conveyed to the subordinate that her arrangement was predicated on demonstrated dedication. The result was the establishment of a 'normative order' which produced the requisite trust from the manager to permit telework for the employee (Hodson, 2001:92). Consequently, the acceptability and continuation of this arrangement were conditional on the subordinate retaining this trust by consistently demonstrating the same level of commitment.

### **6.5.3 Discouragement and restriction**

Where managers had a preference for office-based working, as previously discussed, their management prerogative gave them some leverage to decline requests for voluntary '*official*' telework. However, where managers perceived telework to have strong support within the organisation or backing from trade unions to prevent its unilateral withdrawal, they often felt compelled to '*tolerate*' at least some telework. Furthermore, revoking a previously agreed '*official*' arrangement without sufficient grounds could prove challenging especially where subordinates were disinclined to relinquish it. However, while managers continued to '*tolerate*' telework in these circumstances five methods used by managers to undermine telework were identified. First, where telework was prevalent, managers sometimes increased the amount of time subordinates spent in the office by initiating frequent, last minute meetings. Furthermore managers generally insisted that teleworkers physically attend regular formal meetings, emphasising that attendance was essential if they wanted to be '*really involved*'.

Second, some managers communicated their dislike of telework in a jovial or non-aggressive manner by communicating that they '*liked the team around*'. Such comments implied that while office presence may not be essential for conducting tasks, teleworkers were contributing less to a positive working environment than physically present



employees. A slightly stronger message was conveyed by managers declining to allow or recruit additional teleworkers within the team. This decision was often backed by a business case relating to how conditions had *'changed'*:

Third, some managers took preventative action by suggesting that a subordinate's choice to telework reflected an unsuitable personality type for their team, occupation or organisation. A number of managers described very different jobs and importantly the personalities attracted to them as *'more suitable for telework'*:

*'I was discussing with my team recently, some of the technical guys, they can be quite serious and intense and can sit quietly for hours reading manuals and things, telework is probably ideal for them [...] The kind of people who work in roles like Marketing, especially in Tel-Com, they like to interact with others and have a different kind of energy; they want and need to be seen.'* (Manager of non-technical team - Tel-Com)

By describing the content of *'suitable personalities'* within their working context managers felt that subordinates who so much as requested telework, and especially *'official'* telework, could be considered both uncommitted and unsuited to their team, profession or organisation.

Fourth, managers cast formal teleworkers into an out-group by restricting the practice. More specifically, providing *'official'* telework for *'special reasons'*, such as skill retention or personal necessity, communicated that telework was the exception and not the norm. Furthermore, permitting informal telework *'when required'* at their discretion enabled managers to legitimately present the dichotomy that *'official'* telework was unnecessary, unless subordinates were prioritising their non-work life. Such restrictions prevented an *'opening of the flood gates'* for requests from *'ambitious'* subordinates, enabling managers to retain some control over the supply and practice of telework:

*'In my current team now there is not one single teleworker. That doesn't mean they don't work from home on occasion, but there are no official teleworkers. I'm not saying they're in the office all the time, I have a*

*number of people in the team who spend three days in the office and two at home depending, but they're flexible, it's not set in stone.'* (Manager, technical-team - Tel-Com)

Fifth, some managers used promotion as a means of enticing subordinates to relinquish a formal teleworking status. They suggested that the only available promotions were to office-based roles and that by returning to the office subordinates would demonstrate the requisite commitment to be considered. Some managers offered promotion more directly on the condition that subordinates *'come back in'*. Alternatively, a number of managers took subordinates' decision to telework in the first place as an indication that they were unambitious and therefore disinterested in promotion. Overall, managers felt that subordinates were provided with a choice over their destiny and that their decision to telework and/or not to return to the office indicated a willingness to forgo promotion.

*'If someone has no ambition to get to the next level or anywhere else and they are just happy doing exactly what is required they can absolutely do (work) from home. But of course if they want to progress, get different opportunities, then they would want to interact with different people and demonstrate that they can actually count the beans, act interactively, work interactively, and have the right personality to move things forward to lead people or whatever it might be. Of course you don't get those sorts of opportunities if you're someone who is sitting at home.'* (Manager, non-technical team – Tel-Com)

This conceptualisation of teleworkers as *'happy at their level'* enabled managers to feel legitimate in developing and promoting office-based subordinates above teleworkers, sending a strong signal that telework resulted in professional isolation.

#### **6.5.4 Prohibition and withdrawal**

Where managers considered telework unfavourably and felt the organisation to be unsupportive of it, they generally declined requests for telework. When subordinates were already teleworking in an informal manner, managers simply forbade or reduced the

practice where possible. If subordinates were already '*official*' teleworkers, managers often unilaterally revoked the arrangement. Revocation ranged from moving the subordinate to occasional, ad hoc telework and allowing them to keep teleworking equipment to '*soften the blow*', to direct orders to return to the office. The former was more common for higher-level or skilled subordinates and the latter for staff with general skills who were considered more '*easily replaceable*'. However, in both cases where an instruction to return to office working was resisted, managers applied pressure and even threats.

Prohibiting managers often '*pushed the business case*' for office-working, citing confidentiality concerns, changes in internal or external client needs, incompatible environmental conditions, or changing company or team structure as their rationalisation for preventing or withdrawing telework. This rationalisation enabled them to use their legitimate authority to address what they presented as organisational needs, rather than simply undermining a previous decision. Often managers looked to the environment to back up their actions. In particular, where they perceived questionable top management support, or where managers felt that overall commitment to telework was waning, managers found it easiest to directly withdraw an arrangement. As the acceptability of telework was already in question, collecting environmental justifications effectively pre-empted any counter response from teleworkers that '*it had worked well so far*'. For example, one manager explained how a non-teleworker had enquired whether a teleworker had left the organisation, which justified his request for the teleworker to return to the office for the sake of '*communication and visibility*'. Often, in these circumstances managers could present uncooperative teleworkers as '*insubordinate*', '*inflexible*', and acting against the company's best interests, behaviour which was deserving of disciplinary action. This sent a strong message to teleworkers that '*fighting*' to retain their arrangement without sufficient leverage was inadvisable at the same time as deterring non-teleworkers from requesting an arrangement.

## 6.6 Summary

This chapter has considered senior managers' and managers' influence over the supply and practice of telework for employees. Organisational factors and senior managers'

perceptions and behaviour towards telework were shown to influence managers' perceived organisational support for the practice and, related to this, their expected behaviour. In turn, managers' perceptions of their expected behaviour, alongside their own preferences towards telework determined their behaviour with respect to permitting and managing telework. Managers' preferences towards telework depended on their anticipated or experienced outcomes of telework and, in particular, their perceived ability to fulfil their obligations as a '*good manager*' in a teleworking context.

In cases where organisational support for telework was strong, sympathetic managers demonstrated support, while unsympathetic managers were compelled to tolerate telework. However, unsympathetic managers attempted to discourage and restrict the practice among subordinates. In cases where organisational support for telework was weak, sympathetic managers either concealed subordinates' telework or championed telework for individual subordinates while still requiring them to limit disruption to others to avoid challenge. Finally, unsympathetic managers in these circumstances prohibited or withdrew subordinates' telework. However, despite managers' strong influence over subordinates' access to telework, evidence suggested that where organisational support for telework was strong and/or teleworking subordinates enacted '*good teleworker behaviours*', managers could '*get used to*' the practice. The actions of managers, discussed in this chapter, had an important influence on their non-teleworking and teleworking subordinates' perceptions and behaviour towards telework. These themes are discussed in the next two chapters.

## **CHAPTER 7: Telework and the Workgroup**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The empirical findings with respect to non-teleworkers' responses are presented in this chapter. This chapter investigates the perceptions and experiences of teleworkers' peer-level colleagues, their subordinates, and those who support telework from a personal and professional standpoint within teleworking environments, and outlines their resultant actions towards teleworkers. The chapter begins by considering the factors within the organisational environment which influenced non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework. The chapter moves on to consider how characteristics of different job roles, teleworkers' behaviour and their personal circumstances influenced non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework. Finally, the chapter analyses non-teleworkers' behaviours towards telework. A summary is presented at the end of the chapter.

### **7.2 Non-teleworkers' perceptions of telework within their organisation**

Non-teleworkers' perceptions of telework within their organisation were influenced by their perceived benefit of telework to organisational performance and the way in which telework was managed. Non-teleworkers' actual or anticipated experiences of participating in telework and of colleagues' teleworking were also influenced by these factors.

#### **7.2.1 Teleworking is inevitable – High-Tech**

Non-teleworkers at High-Tech perceived telework to be salient to the organisation's purpose, synonymous with a progressive and dynamic organisation, and invaluable not only to the business but to *'modern life'*. They described teleworking as *'living the brand'* and considered that all employees were able to telework freely. The prevalence of telework meant that the non-teleworkers at High-Tech had some previous personal experience of teleworking and were *'used to'* colleagues and managers teleworking extensively. Furthermore, senior managers' endorsement of telework and the ubiquity of supportive technologies not only conveyed to non-teleworkers that telework was an enduring practice

but signalled that appearing unsupportive of it would be viewed as acting against the organisation's interests. For example:

*'People would not like to be seen as hindering flexibility. It is understood that people need to be flexible wherever they work and this needs to be facilitated. Getting in the way of that is not tolerated whoever you are. Nobody would do that'. (Non-teleworker - High-Tech)*

The non-teleworkers at High-Tech were both new recruits and inexperienced hires that remained within their respective offices out of choice. These non-teleworkers justification for remaining office-based was their frequent use of specialist equipment and their appreciation of seeing others who entered the office *'from time to time'*. However, they described having adequate online resources to conduct their jobs remotely, received frequent formal training and considered that teleworking would be inevitable for them in the future.

The main challenges for non-teleworkers at High-Tech were getting used to being *'alone in the office'* and the *'one-sided'* communication that occurred within mentoring relationships. Teleworking mentors' inability to observe mentees' problems first-hand meant they relied on their non-teleworking mentees to be *'forthcoming with issues and problems'*. Non-teleworkers were consequently required to highlight their own performance issues which, first, they felt they may not be able to recognise themselves and second, they were sometimes inclined to conceal due to High-Tech's *'up or out'* culture. However, the distribution of colleagues and clients meant that they perceived working separately from managers and mentors as inevitable and the need to build and maintain remote relationships as inherent to the organisation's culture. As office-based substitutes for teleworkers were unavailable, those *'suited'* to the organisation felt expected to overcome these barriers by acquiring the skills to work remotely, learning how to communicate problems in a constructive manner, and building trust remotely:

*'I have a manager and two peer-level colleagues who telework and I make sure that I keep in touch with them. OK I do miss the presence of them, if I'm honest it would be nice to have them in the same office as I*

*could pick up more but I just have to make more effort to keep in touch and make sure they know what I'm doing and vice versa [...] I need to make sure my manager knows I'm doing a good job as he provides feedback to his manager who is based in (alternative location ) and that affects my assessment' (Non-teleworker - High-Tech)*

Due to the prevalence of telework within High-Tech, non-teleworkers described interacting in a similar manner with all colleagues regardless of whether they were teleworkers. For example, requests to support staff, or dealings with the HR, marketing or compliance departments were conducted electronically due to the distribution of personnel. When visiting the organisation's large UK head office, a striking feature was the scarcity of employees and the apparently limited personal benefit to non-teleworkers of remaining office based from the perspective of interaction or visibility. This impression was confirmed by non-teleworkers, who felt that remaining office based would not improve their own career prospects due to colleagues' inevitable dispersion. Finally, as teleworking was widely accepted within High-Tech, non-teleworkers felt that teleworking extensively would not result in any '*professional disadvantage*' so long as employees achieved their targets and '*made others aware*' of achievements.

### **7.2.2 Teleworking is undesirable: Local-Gov**

Non-teleworkers at Local-Gov perceived telework to be unsuited to the organisation and felt it worked against the interests of clients. Aside from providing visible availability and accountability, most non-teleworkers considered an office presence essential to maintaining their '*duty of care*' towards their clients, the general public, through access to appropriate learning and colleague support. This perception was evident in many roles but most notably in those involving external client-facing responsibilities. In particular, teleworking was felt to reduce the opportunity for employees to forge informal mentoring relationships and experience '*real-life situations*' which were regarded as essential for developing the social and emotional coping skills required within a local government working environment. Social work provided the most extreme example:

*'With fewer people around you won't get the variety of learning. You'll get training of course, but you'll get a firmed up situation where you're being mentored by someone to make sure you're getting some experiences, but they're safe, not real. In this job it can be a bit of a shock the first time you really see the grit [...] there can be big consequences from our quick decisions, but sometimes that's what's necessary, so of course you want as much assurance as possible that you're making the right one [...] I think exposure to reality and variety and more experienced people gives you preparation and confidence and this happens by people being together in the office, not teleworking' (Non-teleworker - Local-Gov).*

A preference for office presence was reinforced by non-teleworkers' perceptions that managers favoured office working. Non-teleworkers felt that managers *'made it clear'* that they opposed teleworking by directly declining requests, or insinuating that participation in telework could lead to unfavourable outcomes for both teleworkers and their office-based colleagues. Non-teleworkers then felt that by teleworking they would appear uncommitted to their role, team and organisation. Furthermore, in the organisation's cost-cutting environment, non-teleworkers considered teleworkers *'dispensable'* for two reasons. First, the norm of office presence meant that dismissing teleworkers would be less *'upsetting'* to the office dynamic, putting teleworkers *'in the firing line'* for future cuts. The previous dismissal by redundancy of teleworkers compounded these fears. Some non-teleworkers who had *'survived'* selection for redundancy attributed their retention to their ability to *'demonstrate'* their value by office working:

*'I have remained in my team and I have remained in the office and I am the only lone survivor [...] I know that I'm doing excellent work and people have seen me do it. I can stand my ground when I need to. It's not so easy if people haven't seen you and I think in my situation that is evident, so people prefer to come into the office'. (Non-teleworker - Local-Gov)*

Second, non-teleworkers feared that conducting their jobs successfully through teleworking signalled to the organisation that retaining their team or role *'in-house'* was unnecessary,



exposing their role to dismissal or potential outsourcing. This perception that by teleworking they could threaten both their own and their colleagues' job security deterred non-teleworkers from teleworking.

On a personal level, since non-teleworkers at Local-Gov were '*used to*' working in close proximity with colleagues they described '*losing a colleague*' to telework like someone '*leaving the family*'. One non-teleworker at Local-Gov described '*going through a grieving process*' when colleagues moved to formal telework and perceived their voluntary participation in it as a form of personal rejection:

*'It's amazing how sad it makes you when people opt to work from home because you miss them. You think, "Oh didn't you like working with me then?"' (Non-Teleworker - Local-Gov)*

Non-teleworkers also felt that by teleworking, colleagues left them with the responsibility of maintaining symbolic availability and demonstrating necessary accountability to the public. These underlying perceptions contributed to the feeling that by remaining office-based, non-teleworkers were more '*valuable*' to peers, clients and the organisation than teleworkers. However, despite their perceptions of doing more '*valuable*' work, the rigidity of pay bands prevented non-teleworkers from seeking additional rewards, which led some to perceive that teleworkers '*got away with*' doing less. Consequently, unless a '*good reason*' for teleworking could be established, non-teleworkers considered teleworkers to be '*selfish*'. These perceptions were exacerbated by the promotional literature for telework at Local-Gov which emphasised personal, rather than professional benefits from teleworking such as the ability to '*hang out washing*', leading non-teleworkers to suggest that teleworking sounded like '*a big skive*'. The prevalence of this perception led one non-teleworker at Local-Gov to fear that if they teleworked, they would be regarded in a similar way:

*'Your colleagues would think you're not committed and not working hard because there is extra pressure on them. They'd be blaming you for all the things that you should be there dealing with and I have certainly seen this, they do have a bad view of teleworkers [...] it's obvious from the way*

*they talk about them [...] If you're here you don't feel like you're letting your colleagues and your customers down' (Non-teleworker - Local-Gov)*

Consequently, while telework was not expressly prohibited, non-teleworkers could perceive it undesirable and likely to result in stigmatisation. In particular, the requirement to take an 'official' status to access telework led non-teleworkers to perceive the practice as 'too obvious' and therefore damaging to their working relationships and career prospects. As most participants at Local-Gov envisaged their advancement to be internal within the established hierarchy, they felt that 'putting in the time' and being 'dedicated' to serving the local community were prerequisites for success. As a result, except where employees had a personal reason for conducting telework (discussed below), it was most often performed by more senior employees who had already 'proved their worth' within the organisation and who had an interest in the success of telework. More specifically, those with the desire to promote telework, and in particular those in the property services division, performed telework to act as 'champions' for it. However, rather than encouraging telework, non-teleworkers often perceived that it was provided to the 'privileged few', based on status or tenure. Furthermore the subjective 'strategic' nature of prominent teleworkers' tasks caused non-teleworkers at lower levels to question the contribution of these higher level teleworkers to the organisation:

*'So they do strategic work. Fair enough (laughs). But what does that actually mean? It's a bit vague isn't it? Sometimes I think nobody actually knows and they get paid enough for it! They could do anything couldn't they?'* (Non-teleworker - Local-Gov)

The overriding perception that telework was a privilege meant that where it was permitted for peer-level colleagues, non-teleworkers perceived this as 'favouritism'. Perceptions of 'favouritism' and therefore inequity also followed from the restricted amount of telework available due to the limited supply of teleworking equipment within Local-Gov. Inequity perceptions were exacerbated further where non-teleworkers felt colleagues' flexibility came at the expense of their own, especially if telework had been granted without prior consultation or demonstrable 'good reason':

*'I asked for some holiday and my manager told me no. He said there needed to be someone available, and I thought, well that's rich, there are a few of us in this team and yes the other office-based guy was also away, but there are two homeworkers, what about them? They're allowed to come and go as they please. So my job is the same as their job but with the added job of being here [...] they didn't give any consideration to those in the office at all when they were allocating places on the pilot. They just let them do it when they asked. There would have been a benefit from consulting the people who were specifically going to be affected by it, 'cos some office jobs changed quite dramatically and now that they telework there's clearly no way they could accommodate us doing it too or I could have had that leave.'* (Non-teleworker - Local-Gov)

The perception of telework as inaccessible led non-teleworkers to consider teleworkers to have an unfair share of entitlements such as company cars, petrol, parking, travel allowances and teleworking equipment. A lack of clear information about teleworkers' entitlements led some non-teleworkers to speculate regarding the exact nature of these benefits, resulting in exaggerated or false perceptions of unavailable entitlements, such as paid alterations to homes and childcare.

On a practical level, as telework was scarce, the inconvenience to non-teleworkers from others' teleworking was reduced by the availability of office-based substitutes for teleworkers. However, despite this, the perception of telework as both inequitable and antithetical to the organisation's purpose incentivised some non-teleworkers to resist the practice. In particular, resistance was evident where telework visibly lacked management support as the threat of repercussions from being personally unsupportive of telework was perceived to be low. Finally, a perceived lack of top management support led some non-teleworkers to feel able to resist telework, despite it having the support of a teleworker's direct manager:

*'I don't see it being encouraged. It's up to managers really, though they have to ensure it works for the rest of us because it reflects very badly on*

*them if it doesn't. They don't want us folk saying it's causing us problems'*  
(Non-teleworker - Local-Gov)

Within Local-Gov, securing favourable perceptions and assistance from non-teleworkers was thereby often reliant on teleworkers' own behaviour, discussed below.

### **7.2.3 The benefits of teleworking are ambiguous – Tel-Com**

Non-teleworkers at Tel-Com described telework as *'the nature of the industry'*, *'progressive'* and *'necessary'* for *'some roles'*. Where telework helped colleagues to *'clear their backlog'* and perform important *'focused tasks'* it was considered performance-enhancing and therefore *'best for everyone'*. Where teams were distributed, telework was felt to be inevitable and non-teleworkers felt expected to *'make it work'*. For this reason most non-teleworkers had personal experience of teleworking or working with colleagues who teleworked. However, some non-teleworkers also perceived that the organisation valued an office presence which led non-teleworkers to refrain from teleworking for two reasons. First, some considered that the economic climate had made employment within the organisation more precarious and that it was prudent to maintain visibility within this environment to enhance their job security. Some non-teleworkers also commented that they had noticed an increased office presence from teleworkers which they attributed to this reason:

*'They don't want to be a number on a spreadsheet; in a credit crunch they think people will think, I know him, I know what he does, where he is. If you see a person and you've met them they may be more likely to be kept, that's why they come in. I certainly think.'* (Non-teleworker - Tel-Com)

Second, across job types non-teleworkers felt that social abilities such as influence, negotiation, and commanding authority would enhance their *'promotability'* which describes the ability to be nominated for promotion within the organisation (Hoobler et al, 2009: 1). Non-teleworkers considered that working in isolation would prevent them from displaying the skills and behaviours required to progress, especially into management. In a number of cases ex-teleworkers expressed a preference for teleworking and had perceived

personal productivity benefits to result from doing so, but had '*come back in*' to the office to avoid undesirable professional consequences and enhance their recognition to secure promotion.

Previous experience of telework led some ex-teleworkers to acknowledge these performance benefits for teleworkers, including enhancements to concentration and productivity. Furthermore, ex-teleworkers often empathised with teleworkers' longer working hours and experiences of social and professional isolation. However, support from non-teleworkers was offered on the proviso that teleworkers were disadvantaged professionally by comparison to themselves. More specifically, where non-teleworkers perceived that their own access to telework, and especially formal telework, was restricted by their desire for recognition and progression, non-teleworkers felt that teleworkers should accept their outcomes:

*'I feel for the teleworkers because it's frustrating. You can work far harder and people don't see it... You can be working when you're sick and no-one knows... I knew I'd have to come back in because people need to see you make that effort.... So I guess you just have to choose which one is more important to you in the end, that extra bit of flexibility or your career, and I chose my career, and at the moment they're choosing telework' (Non-teleworker - Tel-Com)*

With regard to access, the ability to perform voluntary telework was reliant on the agreement of an employee's manager. When a manager's approach to telework was considered '*fair*', non-teleworkers had more favourable perceptions of the practice. In particular, where telework was considered '*open to all*' within their role, non-teleworkers had the most favourable perceptions of teleworking. Some non-teleworkers perceived telework to be arbitrarily restricted by their manager compared with equivalent roles or teams, or felt that telework was provided inequitably within their own team which led them to unfavourable perceptions of the practice. In these cases some non-teleworkers described access to telework as '*a lottery*' and felt teleworkers received '*special treatment*'. Perceptions of inequity were exacerbated for some non-teleworkers who felt organisational policy did not require teleworkers to display sufficient flexibility. One non-teleworker

mentioned a standard phrase entered into formal teleworkers' emails which read '*when contacting me or arranging meetings, please bear in mind that I am a homeworker*' which he found infuriating:

*'I couldn't believe it! I'm supposed to arrange my life around theirs even though they already have all of this flexibility! Some people say in jest, but we probably actually mean it 'working from bed'. It's a common comment. It's seen that if you work from home you have an easy life.'*  
(Non-teleworker - Tel-Com)

However, non-teleworkers considered managers who permitted telework to be supportive of it, and therefore anticipated personal repercussions from overtly resisting colleagues' telework. The exceptions were when non-teleworkers doubted managers' support or could demonstrate sufficient personal inconvenience from others teleworking. Furthermore, depending on the teleworkers' job role and status and the prevalence of telework within a role, non-teleworkers could sometimes resist telework covertly (discussed below). Overall, within Tel-Com, non-teleworkers' perceived acceptability of telework was most strongly influenced by the nature of teleworkers' job roles, as well as teleworkers' and their managers' behaviour.

### **7.3 Non-teleworkers' perceptions of telework in different job roles**

It must be noted that some job types were not represented at High-Tech and Local-Gov. However, where relevant, participants' perceptions of the suitability of telework to job roles within their wider organisation were taken into account. Furthermore, in a number of cases, factors within the organisational environment, discussed above, had an important influence of the acceptability of telework within different job roles (considered in Chapter 9). However, to some extent, at all three organisations, the nature of job roles influenced non-teleworkers' perceptions of the acceptability of telework, and a number of consistencies and differences were identified across the diverse contexts.

### 7.3.1 Internal-standardised roles

Internal-standardised roles were the only roles universally considered unsuited to telework within the study, due to the tacit expectation that these employees would be *'available'*, *'helpful'*, and importantly, *'there'*. Consequently, non-teleworkers performing internal-standardised roles generally perceived telework to be both unsuited to their role and unavailable, and therefore had little previous teleworking experience. Non-teleworkers within these roles also described telework as personally undesirable for four job-related reasons. First, these employees generally assisted in the completion of others' tasks and felt that separating themselves from the organisation would detract from their job enjoyment and their ability to perform their role, by reducing their awareness of their contribution to the wider organisation:

*'When you're sitting in the office, you get to hear things, so you have a vague idea of what's going on, so if someone gives you something to do, although you may not have been involved in it before, you actually know what it is. If you were just sent something, it would just be a pile of stuff. You would have no idea how it impacted the business' (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Local-Gov)*

Second, employees considered that restricting their understanding of the organisational environment, together with reduced availability, would prevent them from being *'helpful'* which was considered their *'professional purpose'*. Helpful behaviour was often spontaneous, and was performed in response to unpredictable situations and events. Furthermore, the inherent difficulty of measuring *'helpfulness'* meant that frequent displays of helpful behaviour were required to achieve recognition. Consequently, telework reduced opportunities for those performing internal-standardised roles to be recognised as *'helpful'* within the office. Reduced recognition was feared to impede potential progression within other teams or departments, and was reliant on making internal contacts or simply being *'spotted'* as *'helpful'*, *'personable'* and *'hardworking'* by relevant colleagues. Those performing internal-standardised roles perceived that not just their progression but their job security could be compromised by reducing their *'helpfulness'*, due to the ease of reassigning their tasks:

*Researcher – Why couldn't you do your job from home?*

*Participant – 'We can't really do that from home. If we're not in the office it's difficult 'cos some people will say, "oh will you come and have a look at this quickly" or "help me on this" or stuff like that [...] our job is to be helpful, if we're not here it doesn't look very helpful and they might feel they have to do it themselves, and some already do.' – (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Tel-Com)*

Third, the ease and perceived necessity of reassigning teleworkers' tasks within internal-standardised roles led non-teleworkers to anticipate that colleagues would experience increased workload, should they opt to telework. For one non-teleworker this belief derived from her own experience of working with a teleworking peer. The non-teleworker described being '*irritated*' by the '*expectation*' that she would do '*two people's jobs*' and emphasised that she would not wish to put colleagues in that position.

Fourth, employees performing internal-standardised roles most often described their colleagues as friends and placed great personal value on the affective components of their workplace relationships. As a consequence, they felt that by teleworking they would be '*turning their back*' on friends as well as overburdening colleagues. For example, one ex-teleworker performing an internal-standardised role described how teleworking had made her feel '*redundant*' and '*guilty*' which had prompted her to return to the office as soon as she was able. As telework was felt to be antithetical to the role, non-teleworkers within internal-standardised roles perceived the only acceptable telework to be where colleagues had a recognisable personal need.

### **7.3.2 External-standardised roles**

Tasks within external-standardised roles were often considered '*teleworkable*' as they required little formal collaboration and performance was easy to measure against targets. However, non-teleworkers within these roles resisted telework and described office-working as preferable in their role for four reasons.



First, non-teleworkers performing external-standardised roles felt that both their technical skills and their '*communication*' and '*coping*' skills were learned by witnessing more experienced peers and managers '*handling*' unplanned and challenging situations. Second, working proximately with colleagues was thought to be beneficial for managing interactions with both clients and managers. Interactions with clients could be frustrating due to rigid behavioural specifications which limited employees' scope to assist clients who expressed dissatisfaction. At the same time, failure to adhere to prescribed rules often resulted in reprimands from managers. If colleagues were dispersed, some feared that communications could be misjudged by managers and peers. Consequently, they preferred to receive corrective feedback '*in person*' and appreciated having peer support '*on hand*' to ensure work was '*emotionally manageable*':

*'In my last place I was doing a similar role. Some of my team were homeworkers and sometimes there was only one or two of us in the office building. When something happened like someone's giving you a hard time you need sympathy or back-up and they're not there. You can explain it later, but they don't understand and you feel they're a bit unsympathetic because it's hard to explain. You have those moments don't you, when things happen and there's an atmosphere? Sometimes it's not what someone says to you, it's how they say it and just relaying the words doesn't really do justice to how it made you feel at the time, so yes, you do miss the support and the shared understanding' (Non-teleworker, external-standardised role - Tel-Com)*

In emotionally challenging situations, not just receiving but offering support could reduce stress as it was regarded as a form of insurance, securing others' assistance against future personal challenges. Where colleagues teleworked, opportunities to both offer and receive support were reduced. As these employees would sometimes take over or help with the '*difficult case*', limited support and assistance between colleagues was also considered to result in an inferior service for customers who, in many cases, often rated their performance though post-contact surveys.

Third, due to their low-skilled tasks, non-teleworkers in external-standardised roles acquired the majority of their work enjoyment and motivation from interactions with peer-level colleagues. Consequently, they anticipated that teleworking would result in social isolation and boredom which could also impair their job performance. As performance often directly determined rewards, the potential for impaired performance acted as a deterrent to telework:

*'What? Sit on my own all day without my friends, doing this job? [...] I rely on (colleagues) to keep me going or I'd never manage my targets. You have to understand Amanda; my job is seriously less interesting than my Xbox!'* (Non-teleworker, external-standardised role - Tel-Com)

Fourth, ambitious employees who performed external-standardised roles were often unsure of the 'next step' in their career and suggested that networking proactively and extensively and learning to 'be creative' when competing for internal career opportunities was essential. Many perceived their current position as a 'stepping stone' into the organisation and competition for progression as fierce. These employees expressed the desire to 'get their face known' and believed that telework would be detrimental to this end. The fear of telework being imposed involuntarily within their role often prompted non-teleworkers to respond defensively when asked whether they felt their jobs were suited to telework:

*'Well I guess some would think our job is suitable. I think it would be a ridiculous idea actually, why would they want to? It would only put client data at risk and damage the end service and it would make networking impossible for us. It's not a career dream to be in a call centre forever is it? And there's plenty trying for the opportunities that do exist'* (Non-teleworker, external-standardised role - Tel-Com)

In general, non-teleworkers in external-standardised roles perceived telework to be both personally and professionally unacceptable. They described managers who 'made a case' for telework as 'letting down' clients and the team, and colleagues who wished to telework as 'selfish' for the same reason. These perceptions led some non-teleworkers performing external-standardised roles to express resistance towards telework.

### 7.3.3 Non-technical teams

Non-teleworkers within non-technical teams often considered telework to be accessible, depending on their needs and the preferences of their manager and many had participated in telework previously. However, non-teleworkers generally remained in the office for four job-related reasons.

First, non-teleworkers in non-technical teams felt that proximate collaboration enhanced learning and feared being '*left-behind*' in '*the way things were done*' if teleworking. Many believed that working with others enabled them to '*learn how to think and interact*' within their team. For example, one marketing employee described how she maintained the necessary '*social and intellectual flexibility*' to perform her role from witnessing and speaking to others within the office.

Second, being part of a present team was also felt to enhance personal influence through colleagues visibly '*backing*' their decisions, and to raise the status of their team within the organisation more generally. Consequently, non-teleworkers in non-technical teams felt colleagues who teleworked extensively demonstrated an inherent unsuitability to their role. For example:

*'If you can't market yourself how can you market the organisation? Visibility and presence are a massive part of that. I cannot see how or indeed why someone in this job, even in this industry would think it's appropriate to work from home all the time' (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)*

*'I think people recognise that our team benefits from spontaneous interaction as well as support, really you should want to chip in, it makes the process better, and it's part of the enjoyment of the job' (Non-teleworker, non-technical team, Tel-Com)*

Where non-teleworkers felt required to maintain team presence in colleagues' absence to retain the team's influence, they also felt that by teleworking extensively colleagues were restricting their own flexibility.

Third, the need to *'bounce ideas off each other'* was frequently mentioned by non-teleworkers within non-technical teams to enhance both motivation and essential creativity. Despite recognising that teleworkers benefitted from conducting *'some tasks'* *'away from the craziness'* of the office, they felt that the *'energetic'* and *'dynamic'* environment of the office stimulated essential creativity. It was impossible to predict when conversations would happen or how *'random trains of thought'* would move or change and the ability to contribute useful input required an understanding of the team's mood, which was described as difficult to convey electronically. Non-teleworkers felt that teleworking prevented remote team members from contributing timely, valued opinions and resulted in feelings that teleworkers personally contributed less while simultaneously being *'left out'* by non-teleworkers.

*'it's always instant, even with your headphones on you can't get away from distractions in the office, But some conversations are essential because you hear things that you wouldn't hear, you contribute and you're part of the process and the process is yours and you're involved [...] it's important to be there and contribute rather than focusing on one small part which by the time it's done maybe won't even fit in anymore so no one will care.'* (Ex-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)

One ex-teleworkers within a non-technical team felt that remote communication had been insufficient to allow them to participate creatively and spontaneously enough to develop collective ideas, and had considered their contributions to be outdated or discordant with others in the office. These performance problems had been exacerbated by inadequate technical support which had caused ex-teleworkers to feel *'extremely isolated'* at home. Isolation led to decreased motivation and therefore reduced productivity, resulting in stress and guilt:

*'Interruptions are fewer, but working from home is just such a shit experience. The people you need to talk to aren't there, the technology is diabolically slow, and doing anything takes ages and you feel like everyone else is there and you're really out of [...] I just couldn't concentrate. The day passes and I felt like I had achieved nothing, I could feel the time slipping away but I couldn't seem to stop it. It was useless and it's a horrible feeling' (Ex-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)*

Finally, non-teleworkers felt that telework could reduce performance recognition as, despite many having individual targets, results were often attributable to the group. As outcomes were collective and often intangible these non-teleworkers felt that their contributions were more easily identifiable than those of teleworking colleagues who could not be observed engaging in the *'collaborative process.'* However, within non-technical teams, greater value was sometimes placed on achieving substantive targets, compelling non-teleworkers to produce similar levels of output to teleworkers in addition to performing extra *'peripheral'* tasks. In these conditions teleworkers were consequently viewed as *'getting away'* with expending less effort outside of core tasks, and in some cases as receiving fewer urgent or important core tasks which were delegated to those within the office. For these reasons, non-teleworkers in non-technical teams often perceived their own contributions as comparatively more valuable than those who teleworked *'officially'* or regularly and felt that their rewards and progression should reflect this.

#### **7.3.4 Technical teams**

There was a general perception that using innovative technologies was consistent with a technical team's professional purpose. Those individuals designing and working with technology were described as *'technophiles'*, meaning that they had a natural propensity for working with technology. Participants within these teams perceived that peers and non-peers recognised technology as both their professional and personal interest:

*'It's not just having technology but the understanding that (using) the technology brings with it, it's about playing with technology, understanding it, it comes naturally to those who work with it. Telework is*

*part of that, people expect technical employees to use technology!’ (Non-teleworker - High-Tech)*

Telework was consequently perceived to be available and was accepted to enhance performance within these roles at all three organisations. The high incidence of telework in technical teams made identifying non-teleworkers challenging, as all participants within these roles had at least some previous experience of telework. However, some members of non-technical teams opted to remain office-based for two reasons. First, membership of a team led some non-teleworkers to suggest that while they felt telework was *‘the norm’*, they wouldn’t like to see *‘the whole team teleworking’*. They felt that avoiding *‘official’* telework and maintaining a team space and identity was valuable for retaining the team’s status within the organisation and ensuring those in other teams knew their purpose.

Second, one non-teleworker in a technical team felt that internal opportunities could be inhibited by telework and was deterred from participating in telework, because they wished to advance in the organisation. However, this perception was not universal, and others felt that promotion or selection for alternative roles would be determined by an objective assessment of their technical skills and knowledge, and would therefore be unaffected by their location of work:

*‘If I applied for a different job internally they would base it on capability and a technical interview. I don’t see that being a teleworker would put me at any appreciable disadvantage in this respect.’ (Non-teleworker, technical team - Tel-Com)*

In general, non-teleworkers within technical teams described having *‘no problem’* with colleagues’ teleworking as they communicated electronically *‘anyway’* within the office, particularly using IM. These non-teleworkers felt that teleworking was an acceptable preference so long as colleagues maintained *‘sufficient’* availability. However, as non-teleworkers within technical teams felt that informal, ad hoc telework was widely available and acceptable as a *‘personal choice’*, they saw *‘no real need’* for colleagues to request *‘official’* telework. Unless there were practical reasons for *‘official’* telework such as the

distribution of colleagues, non-teleworkers perceived a voluntary '*official*' teleworking status to reflect restricted flexibility and reduced commitment to the team.

### 7.3.5 Internal-independent roles

Non-teleworkers conducting internal-independent roles perceived telework to be available and felt that working away from the office could be useful for conducting focused tasks. However, they opted to remain in the office for two professional reasons. First, employees within these roles were often required to direct other employees' behaviour, and understanding organisational politics was considered essential to building the coalitions required to '*progress things*', along with '*knowing what was going on*' and '*who does what*'. Furthermore, some felt it necessary to visibly '*champion*' their initiatives to ensure sufficient engagement and to prevent others from feeling that change was being imposed on them by those unwilling to demonstrate commitment to it. Consequently, non-teleworkers in internal-independent roles described using both their working relationships and visibility to enhance their power and influence within the organisation and to provide a '*point of reference*' for others to remind them of their initiatives and '*maintain momentum*'.

Second, where non-teleworkers within internal-independent roles wished to progress internally they opted to remain office-based to access opportunities which could be created or discovered through extensive internal networking and '*discussing with others how they could help each other*'. In particular, the shorter these employees' tenure, the more beneficial they considered office presence to be in terms of acquiring knowledge of and access to resources. However, they perceived conducting telework to be a personal choice and had '*no problem*' with peer-level colleagues doing so as it had '*no impact*' on their own performance, status or visibility. They also perceived that teleworking formally would not impair internal or external progression so long as it could be demonstrated that their initiatives were successful. Consequently (and perhaps paradoxically), while an '*official*' teleworking status was felt to be acceptable within these roles, practising telework extensively was not if they did not want to be '*forgotten*':

*'You can easily telework officially if you want to in this job, but people need to be on board [...] you need to be aware of peoples' reaction, it's*

*about actually getting them engaged in the whole piece of work I'm doing and spotting opportunities for others [...] if my face wasn't there it just wouldn't work, it would stall and maybe even stop, because a lot of the work I do is based on goodwill it's based on me dragging people along with me. It is very much an influencing role. I can't 'do' to people unless they want to be 'done' to' (Ex-teleworker, internal-independent role - Tel-Com).*

However, while an office presence was sometimes conducive to performance in internal-independent roles, the limited impact of other people teleworking on these employees' performance provided little incentive for them to oppose telework.

### **7.3.6 External-independent roles**

Non-teleworkers performing external-independent roles were in the minority, and some who considered themselves non-teleworkers still teleworked occasionally. The normative acceptability of telework derived from the opinion that it *'made no difference'*. This was so for three reasons. First, the ease of measuring performance (which was rated on a mixture of customer feedback and/or target achievement) prevented perceptions of inequitable effort from teleworkers. Second, the limited requirement for internal collaboration with teleworkers prevented impairments to personal performance. Third, their inability to substitute teleworkers with non-teleworking colleagues, due to teleworkers' specialist skills prevented non-teleworkers from being overburdened with extra work.

However, some non-teleworkers did appreciate being able to *'benchmark'* their own performance against colleagues and/or benefitted from sharing specialist, especially technical, information. Peers' teleworking was felt not to impair information exchange, due to an apparent norm of reciprocity where non-teleworkers assisted teleworkers when needed and expected colleagues to proactively share information in return and to attend scheduled meetings. Those in external-independent roles also generally felt that career opportunities existed both internally and externally to the organisation. Where opportunities were internal a number of non-teleworkers in external-independent roles suggested that *'displaying'* their personalities and *'being around'* may enhance their career prospects.



Furthermore, some suggested that being an ‘official’ teleworker could detract from their progression. However, it appeared that non-teleworkers generally considered colleagues’ teleworking status ‘*made no difference*’ to them and some admitted not knowing whether colleagues were ‘official’ or ‘unofficial’ teleworkers ‘*anyway*’, especially where the role involved travel:

*‘It’s pretty simple really, I have to produce a number of things and not spend too much. I have certain targets. I liaise with my relevant people and they liaise with theirs and we’re specialist in our own areas. We either meet our targets or we don’t. They’re going to be the same targets wherever we work, my peers and manager have no real impact on my performance. So it doesn’t matter in my role. I’ve worked at home and in the office. People are used to working on the phone wherever they are, you can’t tell the difference, most of the time I don’t really know. I don’t really care either as long as they can give me what I need and show up when they’re supposed to. I didn’t even realise that (colleague) was (a formal) teleworker. I just like the office as it’s more convenient for me.*

*(Non-teleworker, external-independent role - Tel-Com)*

Within these roles refraining from telework was generally considered to be a personal preference. Some simply liked working in an office environment full time as they found it a more conducive environment for working (discussed below), and resisting telework was not considered to be either acceptable or necessary if teleworkers adhered to norms of performance and flexibility.

#### **7.4 Non-teleworkers’ perceptions of teleworkers’ personal circumstances**

Non-teleworkers generally considered ‘*personal necessity*’ to be an acceptable reason for teleworking ‘*officially*’. However, they sometimes differed with regard to their perspectives on which circumstances generated a personal ‘*need*’. More specifically, while participants agreed that ‘official’ telework was essential on the grounds of ill health or disability, the ‘*need*’ to provide childcare was debated. A number of non-teleworkers perceived the use of

telework to meet childcare demands as a choice, either because alternative childcare arrangements were possible or because having children was considered to be a choice in the first place. In general, caring requirements were felt to be an acceptable ‘need’ for women but not men. However, using telework to provide childcare appeared to reflect more negatively on non-teleworkers’ expectations of women’s productivity. While there was no evidence that non-teleworkers felt teleworking fathers would suffer significant family distractions, teleworking mothers were presumed to be distracted by their domestic environment to some extent:

*‘it must be difficult for women with children because although the flexibility is useful, they have to fit in other things so it is probably is a bit harder for them to focus I suppose, especially with the children’ (Non-teleworker, technical team, male - Tel-Com)*

This quote illustrates a common assumption among participants that women used telework to fulfil family obligations, regardless of their actual or specified reason for performing telework. While in some cases these perceptions resulted from the stereotypical view of women as caregivers who inevitably prioritised domestic obligations, in other cases assumptions were based on non-teleworkers’ experience of working with female teleworkers. Male participants, in particular, were often deterred from working at home in case family interference made them appear unprofessional, a perception some evidently had of working mothers:

*‘I know a colleague who has two little children and when she’s doing a meeting you can hear wahhhh and fighting and screaming and you can’t help but think, really you should take care of the children instead of sitting here doing that and I think in that situation that she can’t concentrate on what I’m saying as she’s dealing with children fighting in the background. It’s a bit unprofessional and I wouldn’t want to come across like that’ (Non-teleworker, male - High-Tech)*

Non-teleworkers often personally abstained from telework due to the perception that the home environment was not conducive to working. Married women and women with

children in particular, consistently suggested that they had the most responsibility for domestic labour and felt that they would be distracted by their '*domestic duties*'. Furthermore, a number of women perceived that they took an equal share of domestic responsibilities at present, but that if they were to telework these responsibilities would increase in the eyes of family members. Office-based working was therefore maintained to deter these perceptions.

Appearing unprofessional was a worry to some women, but in contrast to men, many were also concerned that working within the home would encroach on their family, particularly if they had insufficient room at home for a dedicated workspace. Ex-teleworkers' experiences provide evidence to verify the legitimacy of these concerns as some had been unable to mesh teleworking with their domestic circumstances which resulted in work-family conflict. A number of female ex-teleworkers had returned to the office to both improve their focus and regain their work-life balance by achieving a more '*equal*' distribution of responsibilities within the home:

*'My husband really enjoyed it because at five o'clock he'd come home and I was there. Now I'm not and he has to come in and peel potatoes and it's good to get him used to that fact. I mean I used to log off at five when the family get back and then work Saturday and Sunday morning to get work finished. Whereas now if work needs doing I don't leave until it's done and it suits me better. My work is important to me and I don't like it coming second to my domestic life. I never wanted that so I stopped teleworking.'* (Ex-teleworker, internal-independent role, female - Local-Gov)

The actions of family members had also evoked guilt in predominantly female ex-teleworkers to the point that they preferred to remove themselves from the home altogether when working. For example, a single mother in a demanding technical role felt compelled to ignore her children and prioritise work to maintain performance which sat uneasily with her role as primary care-giver. Consequently, in order to demarcate her work from her care-giving responsibilities she entered the office to perform paid work, even if this meant returning to work in the evening:

*'it's difficult, but they come first...I've tried telework but I prefer to go into the office because I feel that when I work at home it's an invasion of their space [...] I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to work from home if needed, but really I think nothing of leaving the office at seven, coming home, feeding my beautiful children and then maybe going back to the office if I have to.'* (Ex-teleworker, technical-team, female - Tel-Com)

These experiences led some female ex-teleworkers to surmise that working from home, especially in a challenging role, was *'impossible'* to reconcile with childcare responsibilities. One female ex-teleworker suggested:

*'I don't know how women do it in this role. I certainly couldn't make it work'* (Ex-teleworker, external-independent role, female - Tel-Com)

Where it was believed that teleworkers' working environment compromised their performance, non-teleworkers perceived their own contribution to be more valuable to the organisation. Furthermore where telework was granted due to personal necessity, non-teleworkers perceived it to be a concession rather than an organisational benefit, especially where teleworkers had general skills or where telework was uncommon. Consequently, where teleworkers conducted telework to cater to non-work needs they were considered to be *'fortunate'* to be able to continue working while contributing less to the organisation. Where colleagues had specialist skills, non-teleworkers recognised that it was in the organisation's interest to enable those who wished to accommodate their lifestyle to do so. However, those who were considered to be prioritising their non-work flexibility were still considered less deserving of equal outcomes, especially if non-teleworkers felt inconvenienced by others' telework or the teleworkers' behaviour.

## **7.5 Non-teleworkers' perceptions of acceptable teleworker behavior**

Teleworkers' behaviour was a strong influence on whether non-teleworkers' perceived telework as acceptable. For non-teleworkers, working with more senior teleworkers could

be especially frustrating. For example, where teleworking managers were *'elusive'* or inflexible, their subordinates could feel they received insufficient recognition or access to expert assistance and impromptu feedback. A Particular frustration was teleworking managers' inability to witness and evaluate non-teleworking subordinates' performance, especially when outputs were hard to measure. Another frustration was teleworking managers' inability to provide career-enhancing introductions due to their own reduced influence within the organisation. Problems were also reported where managers were unavailable for necessary interaction, resulting in subordinates missing deadlines or appearing unprofessional to clients:

*'I need (my manager) because unless he sees a contract physically he won't be able to give a decision. He doesn't come in much and he doesn't tell me and I have no idea where he is. I think this impacts on my image because when people want a contract urgently and it takes me time to get it looked at they might think "oh she's holding on to it and she's not doing anything about it" and that makes me look incompetent.'* (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)

Where more senior teleworkers sent non-teleworkers discrete *'packages of work'* to complete non-teleworkers felt it decreased their task identity and significance (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Non-teleworkers' frustration at not being able to see the *'bigger picture'* was exacerbated by teleworkers appearing *'unapproachable'*. Teleworkers were considered *'unapproachable'* where they *'hid behind email'*, were *'guarded'* about their personal lives, and avoided spending time in the office or attending important meetings. Where teleworkers appeared hostile to communication non-teleworkers felt compelled to communicate more formally with them and *'stick to the point'* in correspondence. The resultant reduction in informal communication limited non-teleworkers' knowledge of teleworkers' professional demands, personal environment and, sometimes, their working hours.

To avoid inappropriately disturbing teleworkers, non-teleworkers sometimes increased their own use of email, which many non-teleworkers disliked. In particular, emails were described as time-consuming and *'prone to misunderstandings'*. While vented conflict

between colleagues was sometimes considered inevitable, especially within creative environments, proximity and synchronicity in communication were felt to force more rapid reconciliation. The time taken to *'mull over'* issues and craft an email response appeared to escalate misunderstandings, *'dragging them out'* further and leaving a permanent record of conflict to serve as a reminder of animosity. Consequently, non-teleworkers appreciated teleworkers using synchronous communication where possible and, in particular, phone contact or *'making time'* to see them in the office.

Non-teleworkers' appreciation of the affective benefits which they derived from their workplace interactions could also clash with teleworkers' more instrumental approach to working relationships. In particular, non-teleworkers felt some teleworkers required them to *'drop everything'* to acquiesce to their *'demands'*, regardless of their existing workload. Again this was most challenging for teleworkers' subordinates and support staff who described teleworkers as *'barking orders'* at them with no social engagement. Excessive out-of-hours contact from teleworkers was also mentioned as an irritation as it gave the impression that work was *'mounting up'* for non-teleworkers which could be stressful, and some felt expected to work additional hours to manage their correspondence:

*'People do work over the weekend and that changes the dynamic of the working week because when you come to work on a Monday morning and you left with a clear inbox you find people have been working all weekend and they aren't contracted to do it, it's just because they have that facility. This is mainly homeworkers [...] it sets a standard you know and an expectation which is unreasonable [...] it's expected that you're going to deal with all those emails' (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)*

Some non-teleworkers described how teleworkers or their managers could improve these experiences by *'setting boundaries'* and considering the time of correspondence. Furthermore, where teleworkers were available during *'core hours'*, non-teleworkers felt more comfortable initiating synchronous contact which enabled them to acquire information quickly and avoid misinterpretation and frustration.

Non-teleworkers appreciated teleworkers being forthcoming about details in their own private life, enquiring about non-teleworkers' own lives and taking interest in office news. In addition to signifying care and friendship, establishing more personal and informal communication enabled non-teleworkers to convey their own environmental constraints to teleworkers. Knowledge of teleworkers' working context also helped non-teleworkers to avoid inappropriate contact and therefore prevented them from feeling that they were intruding in teleworkers' domestic environment:

*'I know that my manager has a small child and you don't want to call and wake him, but we've discussed it and I know it's not a problem as he has a separate office with a phone' (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)*

Open communication with regard to the tasks teleworkers performed at home also reduced suspicion over teleworkers' motives for teleworking and comparative effort. For example, one non-teleworker suggested that his manager's planning and reporting tasks '*made sense*' to do at home on a Monday or Friday respectively. By contrast, other non-teleworkers who were unaware of colleagues' reasons for teleworking on similar arrangements had referred to colleagues as the '*Monday-Friday club*' insinuating that they were taking a long weekend. Where teleworkers used strategic self-presentation (Van Dyne et al, 2007) this influenced more favourable perceptions from non-teleworkers with regard to teleworkers' performance. For example, teleworkers providing frequent status updates; informing non-teleworkers when they would be away on holiday or in meetings; and giving advanced warning of delays allowed non-teleworkers time to manage internal or external clients' expectations or take alternative action. Furthermore, non-teleworkers appreciated teleworkers '*making the effort*' to '*come in*' or at least attend meetings and scheduled away-days, and felt that '*good managers*' should insist upon teleworkers' attendance.

Overall, the more communicative, flexible, and appeasing teleworkers were towards non-teleworkers, the more acceptable telework was considered to be and the more likely non-teleworkers were to demonstrate support. Non-teleworkers accepted that some teleworkers were restricted in their flexibility by their personal circumstances. Where telework was considered to be a '*concession*', especially where it was otherwise considered unacceptable,

non-teleworkers expected teleworking colleagues to demonstrate sufficient gratitude in the face of the additional pressure placed on colleagues. Where teleworkers used their labour market strength to negotiate flexibility as a personal preference, non-teleworkers expected teleworkers to accept that their professional outcomes would reflect their reduced commitment. Where non-teleworkers did not perceive teleworkers were behaving in an acceptable manner they sought to apply pressure on teleworkers to do so, discussed further below.

## **7.6 The norm of acceptable telework**

When non-teleworkers were the minority in a team or organisation they were not only incentivised but often required to support telework. A high incidence of telework also encouraged interaction and support from those in alternative roles due to a lack of substitutes for teleworkers within the office. Where non-teleworkers wished to progress into roles considered suited to telework and therefore where telework was prevalent, maintaining links with teleworkers in their target roles was considered a '*shrewd move*'. One participant described being compelled to assist teleworkers in his targeted position in a technical team, as the '*jump*' from his current external-standardised role was too far. Providing assistance to teleworkers facilitated networking for the non-teleworker, enabled him to access a mentor and deepened his understanding of what was required for promotion. Similarly those who wished to access specialist skills often had '*no choice*' but to approach teleworkers. Consequently, where telework was conducted extensively within an occupation or team contact with teleworkers was inevitable, teleworkers were more receptive to contact and participation in telework was considered to be normatively acceptable by both peers and non-peers. These conditions created a virtuous circle of teleworking acceptability where regular telework was recognised as '*beneficial*' to performance and was expected, and supportive technology and processes were established.

Support for telework could be immediate or could follow from three identified conditions. First non-teleworkers sometimes supported teleworking for peers if non-teleworkers perceived it to increase their own opportunities for promotion. Second, non-teleworkers sometimes warmed to colleagues' teleworking arrangements if teleworkers demonstrated



sufficient contact and flexibility. Third, support could follow a *'realisation'* that telework, although *'not ideal'*, was *'inevitable'*. This realisation prompted formerly resistant non-teleworkers to *'make telework work'* to protect their own employment and outcomes. For example, despite initially resisting telework because it detracted from their performance and experiences of work, a number of employees within internal-standardised roles described reaching an understanding that they were more *'helpful'* and *'useful'* in facilitating than inhibiting telework.

*'It was probably about a year or so before we thought "right we actually want to understand what they want" because support staff roles are less and less nowadays, as lots of people do their own. So I think it was more of a case of "look, you know you have work from this person, if you're not supportive and helpful to her she won't be there anymore and then you might not have anything to do" and the team have kind of got behind that a little bit better because of it. It's self-preservation to an extent.'* (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Tel-Com)

Many non-teleworkers described having *'learned'* how to work with teleworkers by developing strategies which facilitated the practice while minimising their own negative experiences. In particular, some non-teleworkers described changing their communication style from reactive responses to polite proactive information provision and engaging in expectation management. For example, one non-teleworker found that conveying their own environmental challenges to teleworkers was effective in preventing teleworkers from feeling ignored, or undermined if they could not respond immediately:

*'I might be busy. Everyone else can see how stressed we are and now they're calling and it's a bad time. It's hard to say no at first because you worry that they think you're being unfriendly or unhelpful, and not being able to say no makes you stressed so you probably do end up being a bit unfriendly [...] but after a while you feel more comfortable saying "it's a bad time because of a deadline or whatever can I call you back" and agree a time when you will and they're normally fine.'* (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Local-Gov)

Non-teleworkers described a '*learning curve*' which led to a '*shift in perceptions*' as challenges were gradually overcome, norms were established and perceptions improved further, leading to a virtuous circle of acceptance.

## **7.7 The norm of unacceptable telework**

When telework was conducted rarely, the presence of peer-level non-teleworkers in the office communicated the value of an office presence. The result was a vicious circle where office presence was enhanced and the perception that telework was unsuited to the team or profession and therefore would detract from performance was perpetuated. Where the acceptability of telework was in doubt, the related culture of office-working increased the availability of office-based substitutes for teleworkers. Where non-teleworkers had previously relied on teleworking peer-level colleagues for friendship, information or creative collaboration, they were able to derive their desired interaction '*more easily*' from present colleagues. Overall, the ability to acquire information and direction from alternative, proximate peers, non-peers and managers increased non-teleworkers' ability to inhibit telework either intentionally or unintentionally. Consequently, unless teleworkers enacted pro-active contact and availability, reduced involvement was inevitable.

Reduced contact between teleworkers and non-teleworkers had several consequences, two of which deserve emphasis. First, sometimes non-teleworkers unintentionally overlooked teleworkers (discussed below), and initially felt guilty but then on reflection resented teleworkers for making them feel or appear neglectful. In particular, where teleworkers did not remind non-teleworkers of their presence and needs, non-teleworkers sometimes blamed them for '*not wanting*' to be involved. Second, less information was available to non-teleworkers regarding teleworkers' activities or contextual constraints. This absence of information created suspicion and led to speculation over teleworkers' effort and contribution to the team and/or the organisation more generally. If non-teleworkers perceived teleworkers' contributions to be inferior, teleworkers' input could be disregarded, leading non-teleworkers to perceive them as adding comparatively less '*value*':

*'Yes, it works OK within the role, it doesn't really cause any issues but I suppose you do forget about them and that must be isolating, but then they're not really interested or they'd make more of an effort wouldn't they? I think some people prefer it that way actually. It makes you wonder what they do, or rather don't do compared to the rest of us. If you can forget about people then do you really need them? I do think some people think they can get away with doing whatever they want at home' (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Local-Gov)*

Consequently, reduced interaction resulted in ambiguity and perceptions of inequity, which could prompt non-teleworkers to become more resistant over time, creating a vicious circle of resistance.

## **7.8 Non-teleworkers' behavioural responses to telework**

Analysis of non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework revealed that their behavioural responses were related to their desire to undermine telework alongside their ability to do so. Analysis of the interview data revealed four categories of behaviour displayed by non-teleworkers, as outlined below.

### **7.8.1 Overt resistance**

Non-teleworkers demonstrated overt resistance towards telework where they considered it to be unacceptable; especially where it was personally disruptive and/or inequitable; and importantly, where resisting telework was perceived to carry few negative sanctions. Two forms of overt resistance were identified.

First, some non-teleworkers undermined teleworkers' performance by intentionally ignoring them or omitting to provide information or help. For example, one non-teleworker described how she would not answer the phone to a teleworking colleague as she refused to 'put up' with the teleworker's 'incessant demands'. Another described simply not responding to email requests and withholding information from teleworkers who he

suggested could *'come and get it'* if necessary. In order to ignore teleworkers, some non-teleworkers circumvented them by actively seeking out substitutes to perform tasks or to provide the information they required within the office. Others used internal company politics. For example, one non-teleworker described avoiding their manager's demands by aligning themselves with a more senior manager in their manager's absence:

*'They're not in the office so you're not going to be hassled by them so much, I think they're probably ignored more than someone who is here. You can hide from their calls if you haven't done their stuff can't you? They do get a bit stroppy (laughs). But recently I've been working with (senior manager) more and that's higher priority anyway so he can't really argue with that' (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)*

Second, some non-teleworkers *'told tales'* about teleworkers to managers or others. In particular, they played on managers' insecurities, regarding managers' own responsibility to maintain visibility, performance quality and accountability to clients, senior managers and their team. It was described as *'particularly effective'* to draw a new manager's attention to the undesirable practices of existing teleworkers. For example, one non-teleworker described how another non-teleworking colleague purposefully told managers that they had not seen teleworkers around for *"some time"*. Additionally, non-teleworkers exposed teleworkers who were off-line or unavailable the morning after a company night out, pointed out teleworkers' mistakes, suggested that teleworkers needed to be *'brought up to speed'* with training and highlighted teleworkers' non-attendance at meetings.

Third, some non-teleworkers described directly confronting managers or teleworking colleagues to express displeasure over telework. One described a *'heated'* phone conversation where she responded to a demanding teleworker with *'oh just go away!'* before hanging up the phone. Another had demanded an explanation from her manager regarding his limited availability and informed him that without a satisfactory explanation and improved contact she would elevate the complaint to senior management. Finally, one manager of a non-technical team complained to a teleworking colleague about *'dealing with'* additional subordinates in the teleworker's absence.

### 7.8.2 Covert resistance

Where non-teleworkers disliked telework but had limited power to overtly resist the practice, they could covertly resist telework. Three forms of covert resistance were identified.

First, non-teleworkers attempted to create or perpetuate a norm of telework as undesirable among peers. For example, several non-teleworkers in standardised roles and collaborative teams suggested that voluntary teleworkers and formal teleworkers in particular, were '*uncommitted*'. They portrayed peer-level colleagues who participated in telework as neglectful to their task, team, or the business. Reasons included, teleworking being '*irresponsible*' where employees worked with '*sensitive*' or '*confidential*' information; contrary to client expectations that employees should '*be there*'; and restrictive to flexibility which was '*detrimental*' to team-working and therefore damaging to the '*end product*'. While these perceptions were not expressed directly to teleworkers, they were thought to be '*well known*', deterring anyone who did not wish to be cast as 'deviant' from requesting telework '*without good reason*' and discouraging them from teleworking '*too much*'. Out-group favouritism (Mummendey and Schreiber, 1984) was also evident as non-teleworkers described those in other professions as comparatively more suited to telework. In particular, those in roles that required '*helpfulness*' and '*collective creativity*' emphasised the suitability of those who performed esoteric technical roles to telework, positioning their own jobs as unsuitable by comparison.

Second, another strategy of resistance was to support exceptional teleworking arrangements for peers. '*Special arrangements*' were only considered '*special*' where the normative acceptability of telework was low and where telework was therefore less popular. Consequently, exceptional arrangements reinforced the perception of teleworkers as an '*out-group*' which, in turn, reinforced a norm of office working for those without '*special*' considerations. This approach provided reassurance that staying in the office was expected to avoid stigmatisation and prevented the anticipation of a '*mass exodus*' by colleagues.

Third, some non-teleworkers attempted to subtly produce their preferred work environment by increasing synchronous communication or attempting to bring teleworkers into the

office to interact with them face-to-face. This approach was commonly used by the disgruntled subordinates of teleworking managers or support staff. For example, one non-teleworker in an internal-standardised role who resented being *'forced into'* extensive and unwanted email communication *'just so that teleworkers could keep a record'*, described undermining its continuance:

*'I have learned the art of picking up the telephone quite a lot cos especially where quite often people send an email and copy someone else in and so on and it goes back and forth, and I can't be doing with that, and so I call them and they're probably sitting there thinking, "damn, I've got no email, they're not going to send one back and that means I can't do this and I can't prove that."' (Laughs) I do that quite a lot'. (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Local-Gov)*

Others and those non-teleworkers with teleworking managers in particular, organised meetings in the office. Interestingly, asking for personal feedback or inviting other important stakeholders such as managers or clients was considered a valuable tactic by non-teleworkers to guarantee teleworkers' attendance.

### **7.8.3 Indifference**

In some cases, non-teleworkers' were not motivated to support colleagues' telework but had no reason to actively undermine it. However, where no incentive to support telework was apparent non-teleworkers could unintentionally undermine it in two ways.

First, non-teleworkers could simply *'forget'* to include teleworkers on a personal and/or professional level. On a personal level, one non-teleworker described forgetting to invite teleworking colleagues to organised lunches or out to post-work social events, claiming that they *'don't really think about it'*. On a professional level, non-teleworkers recounted forgetting to include teleworkers in meetings, omitting to send meeting schedules or notes or include them in correspondence and training. Another described how a colleague had been omitted from an email group which provided their main source of team-related information. Furthermore a number of non-teleworkers in internal-standardised roles

described forgetting teleworkers in administrative tasks, for example, one repeatedly neglected to pay a teleworker's phone bills, resulting in disconnection.

Second, non-teleworkers could unintentionally substitute teleworkers by '*naturally*' seeking necessary interaction, information or clarification from office-based employees either for convenience or to avoid delays. Substitutions of teleworkers were exacerbated where non-teleworkers had a strong preference for proximate contact or feared potentially disturbing teleworkers. For example, one non-teleworker in a non-technical team described '*sounding out*' ideas on '*whoever*' was around:

*'You do try to find them, but when they're not in the office I guess you just use someone else instead as it's a lot easier. Obviously, if someone wants an answer or a discussion they say 'where's X' and if they're not there they will say "OK you might be able to help me then with this" so the homeworkers come off way better in terms of interruptions, but far worse in terms of actual involvement.'* (Non-teleworker, non-technical team - Tel-Com)

For non-teleworkers in roles with general or non-technical skills, relationships with teleworkers held less affective and instrumental utility than relationships with other non-teleworkers, which led to teleworkers becoming '*out of sight and out of mind*'.

#### **7.8.4 Supportive behaviour**

Where non-teleworkers appreciated the benefits of telework for the business, benefitted from it personally, or felt it was essential for '*grateful*' teleworkers, they often supported the practice. Furthermore, when telework was acknowledged as acceptable in the wider organisation and teleworkers were difficult to substitute, they felt compelled to do so. Non-teleworkers demonstrated support for telework in three ways:

First, non-teleworkers acted sensitively towards teleworkers' personal circumstances. Examples included learning when it was appropriate to call; contacting colleagues who were teleworking out of necessity and, in particular, due to ill health for a '*quick natter*' to

help alleviate loneliness; making an effort to arrange meetings when teleworkers could attend; travelling to meetings at or near teleworkers' homes if possible and desired by teleworkers; and ensuring that teleworkers were included on invitations to social events, even if it was unlikely they could attend.

Second, some non-teleworkers described protecting teleworking colleagues from criticism within the organisation by *'doing favours'*. Examples included providing the necessary office cover by agreeing to favourable scheduling to assist teleworkers; *'logging out'* teleworkers who had forgotten to do so; *'nudging'* those in the office on behalf of teleworkers to help protect their performance and using diary entries to *'track down'* these colleagues if necessary; recognising the importance of email audit trails and emailing brief clarifications of the outcomes of telephone exchanges with teleworkers; and even defusing possible disagreements and helping to educate teleworkers about appropriate contact:

*'I am the type of person who will receive an email from someone that doesn't look right and immediately pick up the phone to the teleworker. Otherwise more and more people are getting copied, more and more people are misunderstanding [...] (the teleworker) doesn't do it on purpose. They can be incredibly friendly and thoughtful and they wouldn't like to come across like that. If you can encourage them to keep others in the loop and to communicate better it makes life easier for everyone and there is far less upset and misunderstanding.'* (Non-teleworker, internal-standardised role - Tel-Com)

Third, non-teleworkers demonstrated sensitivity to teleworkers' professional needs. Notably, non-teleworkers in roles where telework was normatively acceptable rarely had to alter their behaviour at all to support telework, as they directly and frequently communicated with teleworkers anyway, including them in discussions and decisions. However, non-teleworkers in professions where telework was felt to be less acceptable could act to increase contact. In particular, non-teleworkers described adopting IM to remain in touch with teleworkers, to provide presence and availability, and to reduce ambiguity (discussed above). Other non-teleworkers described contacting teleworkers during ad hoc office-based meetings or keeping them *'in the loop'* by providing rapid post



hoc updates, highlighting teleworkers' successes to management, and encouraging teleworkers to present their own work to ensure they received ample credit.

## **7.9 Summary**

This chapter has considered non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework and their resultant behaviour towards teleworkers. Where the benefits of telework were accepted by non-teleworkers; organisational support for telework was felt to be strong; teleworkers performed desirable behaviour; or non-teleworkers' relationships with teleworkers had a high instrumental value; non-teleworkers were more supportive of colleagues' teleworking. Non-teleworkers' exposure to favourable telework, or their recognition that telework was inevitable, resulted in a virtuous circle of support for telework at the work-group level. By contrast, in contexts where support for telework was weak or questionable, where telework was felt to be inappropriate or where it appeared inequitable or inconvenient to non-teleworkers, they were more inclined to resist telework. Non-teleworkers' approach to resisting telework depended on the availability of substitutes for teleworkers in the office and non-teleworkers' perception of whether resistance would invite repercussions. In some cases, non-teleworkers undermined telework unintentionally where their relationships with teleworkers had a low instrumental value and/or substitutes were available for teleworkers within the office. Non-teleworkers' behaviour therefore had a strong influence on teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework. Teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework are the focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 8: Teleworkers' Motivations and Experiences**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the empirical findings with respect to teleworkers' responses. The chapter examines the factors which influenced teleworkers' desire to request teleworking, their experiences of teleworking and, where they had the choice, the extent to which they wanted to continue to telework. The chapter begins by discussing the conditions which determined employees' reasons for teleworking and, the factors which underpinned their desire and ability to remain flexible towards work while teleworking. Consideration is then given to how these conditions, alongside the level of support available to teleworkers', combined to produce diverse experiences of telework. In discussing teleworkers' experiences the chapter draws on the conditions outlined in the previous three chapters. A summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

### **8.2 Motivations for teleworking**

#### **8.2.1 Teleworking to enhance performance and prospects**

A number of ambitious teleworkers engaged in telework as they felt it would improve their personal performance and would therefore enhance their productivity and/or opportunities for recognition and career advancement. Those who considered telework to be '*performance enhancing*' generally recognised that they were required to be '*in enough*' and to remain flexible towards clients and colleagues to ensure performance was both enhanced and recognised. In general, teleworkers felt able to conduct '*performance enhancing*' telework most extensively at High-Tech due to the ubiquity of supportive technology and inevitable distribution of operations which created an established '*culture of telework*'. Conversely, teleworkers at Local-Gov felt required to demonstrate a greater degree of presence due to the value placed on physical availability and accountability within the organisation. However, some teleworkers still participated in telework with the belief that it enhanced their personal performance. Finally, at Tel-Com the level of flexibility teleworkers perceived was necessary to optimise performance was most strongly

influenced by the actions and expectations of managers and colleagues, and the nature of their job.

When teleworkers considered their managers to view telework as '*performance enhancing*' they anticipated experiencing favourable professional outcomes from teleworking. Managers were considered to be supportive of telework where they communicated the performance benefits of telework and encouraged subordinates' participation in telework to project a progressive image for the team. Managers' support for telework was also communicated by their own participation in it, by their provision of necessary teleworking tools and by their establishment of effective processes and communication systems for teleworking subordinates. Managerial support for telework was also believed to enhance colleagues' support. Many teleworkers perceived peer and non-peer support as essential for conducting '*performance enhancing*' telework, especially those within collaborative teams. A clear indication of colleagues' support for performance-enhancing telework was, again, colleagues' own participation in telework, and their demonstration of the supportive behaviours outlined in Chapter 7.

The characteristics of the job roles employees performed had an important influence on teleworkers' perceptions of whether teleworking enhanced their performance. Teleworkers felt that their performance was enhanced to the greatest extent by teleworking when they performed job roles with tight deadlines, experienced a variable workflow, or worked on complex focused tasks. Employees performing these roles often found their work intrinsically motivating and considered telework to provide them with the scope to '*just get on with it*'. The extent to which teleworkers felt they could perform telework while still enhancing performance was determined by the requirements for interaction, learning and assessment within their role.

In the case of external-independent roles, a limited requirement for internal interactions within the organisation led teleworkers to describe little performance benefit from entering the office regularly. Furthermore, they felt that teleworking could free up time to concentrate on developmental tasks, ultimately assisting them in enhancing performance for clients. Teleworkers therefore considered their contributions to be '*transparent*' and were unconcerned about reduced recognition from teleworking. Finally, these teleworkers

described being incentivised to use *'catch-ups'* to inform managers of their *'key successes'* which they felt could enhance their recognition.

By contrast, teleworkers conducting internal-independent roles felt required to spend a greater amount of time within the office to maintain performance and enhance learning. The strategic nature of their tasks made attributing success or failure to individuals' efforts, as distinguishable from environmental factors, challenging. Where ambitious teleworkers performing these roles sought recognition, they limited the amount of time they spent teleworking to *'prove their worth'* by demonstrating their effort visibly. However, one employee performing an internal-independent roles felt that it was possible to increase their time spent teleworking and achieve recognition by sending superiors *'green reports'* highlighting *'no current issues'* or by briefing them with key achievements once they and their initiatives were established:

*'At the top of the company I am well recognised, if something is going wrong I will demand (director's) presence and tell them what's going wrong. I don't have an issue with visibility if the strategy is holding tight as normally I send a green report which is like a statement telling them you don't need to worry. So no, visibility isn't an issue. I work very hard to make the clearest possible statement and I give them the opportunity to ask for more info if they want so I don't need to be here all the time, no'*  
(Teleworker, internal-independent role - Tel-Com)

Some teleworkers within non-technical teams felt that teleworking was essential to their performance as separation from colleagues helped them to *'see things from a different perspective'*. However, they also recognised that proximity to others was expected and necessary to enhance learning and achieve recognition as the subjective or collective nature of their tasks made their personal contributions difficult to identify. Furthermore, most felt that spending too much time out of the office would make them appear uncommitted and therefore would be damaging to their professional image.

By contrast, teleworkers who were members of technical teams felt that telework not only improved their performance and their adeptness with technology but could be pivotal to

their professional image. They believed that *'using technology and making it work'* was important for both demonstrating and developing competencies in their field. Furthermore, in technical teams, displaying both an interest in, and proficiency with, technology was considered a prerequisite for membership of the *'in-group'* (Ashforth, 2001; Walther and Parks, 2002):

*We all have (the technology) and we all use it and actually it's interesting because working with the technology, for us in the team, it becomes a social thing rather than a technological thing, and then it continues, you know because it's normal to want to do that. If someone in our team didn't like to work like that, you would wonder if they were in the right team'*  
(Teleworker, technical team - High-Tech)

Consequently, teleworkers within technical teams considered teleworking to an *'appropriate level'* as performance-enhancing and felt it was recognised as such by managers and colleagues. In technical teams where telework was prevalent, some felt it had encouraged effective online collaboration which facilitated valuable information exchange. Finally, some felt that if they worked more proximately with their team the same level of attention would not be afforded to reflection on learning and performance during team meetings.

Where advancement was anticipated to be external or reliant on specialist skill acquisition and/or the demonstration of task proficiency alone, teleworkers perceived that regular telework would not restrict, and could even improve, their career advancement. As many opportunities were felt to exist externally for highly skilled teleworkers, they considered online forums to be the best method of *'getting their skills out there'*. Where teleworkers in various roles were highly distributed they described being *'away from the big wigs anyway'*. These teleworkers felt teleworking consequently *'made no difference'* as their ability to network was determined by their willingness to travel when needed. They therefore considered that unnecessary daily travel would be wasted time and would detract from their productivity or capacity for independent learning.

As flexibility was not perceived to enhance performance or progression within standardised roles telework was not provided or performed for this purpose within these roles.

### **8.2.2 Teleworking for personal needs**

A number of participants performed telework out of personal necessity due to constraints within their non-work lives. A '*personal need*' justification for telework was generally felt to be accepted by managers who '*accommodated*' requests for telework in response to circumstances beyond subordinates' control that would otherwise force them to exit, or reduce their time within the organisation. Most participants who teleworked out of necessity felt that their arrangement was acceptable, even where it was not considered ideal within a job role or the organisation more generally. At Local-Gov in particular, participants felt that the organisation should provide telework in exceptional personal circumstances in order to fulfil their duty of care to employees. At Tel-Com there was a perception that the organisation accommodated personal difficulties '*where possible*' and '*within reason*'. Finally, at High-Tech, participants acknowledged that telework could assist them in managing their personal needs. However, employees' personal needs were secondary to the primary requirement of fulfilling the professional obligations associated with their role and teleworkers accepted this fact.

Teleworkers' personal needs included physical disabilities such as: back pain; hearing problems preventing employees from being able to '*cut out background noise*'; injury with a long recovery period; mental health problems (especially related to personal stress and recovery from traumatic events such as bereavement or divorce); and the fulfilment of specific care responsibilities for dependants. With regards to caring for dependants, telework was considered a necessity where it was either impossible or extremely difficult to provide alternative care. For example, a small number of participants had been compelled to care for a dying partner in the home where alternative arrangements had become '*unworkable*'. Finally, the prohibitive cost of additional childcare outside of conventional working hours was often cited as creating a need for telework. In particular, family relocation had caused several female participants to request telework to manage childcare responsibilities, made impossible by extensive commuting.

### 8.2.3 Teleworking to improve lifestyle

Where conducting formal telework was not essential to teleworkers' continued employment, some suggested that it facilitated their '*preferred lifestyle*'. Teleworkers' decision to telework to improve their lifestyle was influenced by aspects of their job role and the organisational environment. In some cases, where teleworkers were distributed '*anyway*' or were required to work at variable times and within different locations, many considered a formal teleworking status and/or regular telework '*practical*' and necessary for maintaining a '*reasonable*' lifestyle.

In other cases, strong support from the organisation and managers or sufficient '*leverage*' such as high labour market strength, were required to enable teleworkers to access telework with the aim of improving their lifestyle. Lifestyle improvements derived from telework included: a reduced need to travel, which was considered stressful and/or '*dead time*'; the ability to work in more comfortable surroundings by deciding on their own lighting or temperature; the provision of a '*buffer*,' not only for finishing work but for preventing the possibility of being '*alone in the office*', which some found both stressful and isolating; the ability to wear what they wished; and, in one case, the ability to smoke while they worked. For some, the capacity for telework to improve their lifestyle followed dissatisfaction with the office environment. For example, at Local-Gov some long-serving employees described experiencing undesirable change which had altered the working environment and suggested that teleworking was preferable to coming into the office:

*'When I first came to work for Local-Gov it was a lovely, chummy environment where everybody knew everybody. We used to put on pantomimes, all those silly things people in offices do when they're happy. Then the Conservative government at that time started making changes and in my opinion, it never really recovered, so I'm glad to be out of it to be honest' (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Local-Gov)*

Some teleworkers felt that by working in their home, they optimised their time in relation to their hobbies, social interactions and/or family commitments. An individual's perspective on whether telework improved their lifestyle was linked to their gender and domestic

circumstances. A number of married women with children who perceived primary responsibility for childcare were attracted to the flexibility provided by telework for facilitating the fulfilment of domestic responsibilities. None of the men interviewed perceived domestic tasks to be their primary responsibility but a number participated in telework to improve their family life, *'share the burden'* of childcare or simply to avoid being an *'absent father'*.

A notable influence over teleworkers' decision to telework to enhance their lifestyle was their perceptions of *'normal'* behaviour among referent others within their non-work life. Some teleworkers spoke of family or friends in their social circle who were also teleworkers and who therefore *'understood'* and *'respected'* their arrangement. One teleworker described a visible *'community'* of teleworkers within their local area. Visible teleworkers led participants to feel that telework was *'the way of the world'*, *'progress'* and *'necessary for society nowadays'* which reduced isolation both inside and outside of work and led them to feel that participating in the practice was socially *'acceptable'*.

However, teleworkers could also face *'judgement'* and distractions from others. These experiences also appeared to be gendered, as men felt that others respected their need to work at home, but a number of women experienced interruptions from friends *'dropping in'* or asking for *'favours'* which not only interrupted their work but, they felt, devalued it. For example, one teleworker had been asked if she could pick a friend's children up from school *'seeing as she was at home'*; another was upset that a neighbour had asked disparagingly if she had given up work and was *'spending her husband's money'* and another's adult son would habitually *'pop in'* on his way home from shift work. To escape the judgement and intrusions of others some women were considering returning to the office. Finally, where telework was a necessity or strong preference, many women were resigned to these interruptions and described *'doing their best'* to manage them. However, managing intrusions sometimes involved having to be *'firm'* with friends and family which could be uncomfortable and damaging to non-work relationships and upsetting, especially for mothers, discussed below.



### 8.3 The influence of the home-working environment

Teleworkers who lived alone and teleworked out of personal preference generally felt unrestricted in both their spatial and temporal flexibility towards work and were therefore able to work '*as they pleased*' or '*when required*'. This unrestricted ability to manage their work and non-work commitments led teleworkers to consider telework to be stress-reducing, especially in demanding roles. Furthermore, although social interactions were inevitably reduced when teleworking, these teleworkers' ability to '*go in frequently*' enabled them to maintain the '*social aspect*' of their working life, preventing perceived social isolation. When teleworkers who lived alone teleworked out of personal necessity, their spatial flexibility could be restricted, but the absence of caring responsibilities meant that their temporal flexibility was unrestricted by their non-work environment.

Where teleworkers lived with non-dependants they were often distracted by them, particularly if they had no separate work space. For example, one participant was interrupted by her father who '*didn't understand*' that she was working. Where teleworking was an unrestricted choice, if strategies to avoid disruption (such as expressing the importance of concentration) failed, teleworkers often reduced their time spent teleworking to '*avoid distractions*'. Consequently, those teleworking out of personal necessity suffered the most unwanted distractions from non-dependants.

When teleworkers cared for a dependant parent or partner they suffered inevitable restrictions to their work-directed flexibility and particularly their spatial flexibility. Importantly, both men and women subject to these conditions perceived their circumstances to be exceptional, unavoidable and deserving of sympathy. In general, these teleworkers experienced sympathy from managers and colleagues and were extremely grateful for being able to make '*the best of a bad situation*' which they also viewed as temporary. By contrast, teleworkers felt that caring for dependent children was considered 'normal' and therefore that it did not attract the same level of sympathy from others. Teleworkers felt expected to sufficiently manage their childcare responsibilities alongside their work commitments in order to be considered capable of doing their job.

### 8.3.1 The experience of the teleworking mother

Maintaining focus and work-directed flexibility, while teleworking in the presence of dependent children, was more challenging for women than for men. Teleworking men were considered by both sexes to suffer fewer distractions from within their domestic environment than teleworking women whose inability to ‘*ignore*’ their children was something that consistently separated them from men. More specifically, women commonly perceived children to be their primary responsibility and ‘*ignoring*’ them to prioritise work resulted in guilt. However, neglecting work to care for children resulted in stress causing some women to feel they would be perceived either as a ‘*bad teleworker*’ by colleagues or a ‘*bad mother*’ by their children or others. A consequence was that women with children used either extensive integration or segmentation strategies to balance their work and non-work lives, leading to polarised experiences of telework among teleworking mothers.

Women with children used integration strategies under the following two circumstances. First, ambitious women who perceived primary responsibility for domestic tasks, but performed jobs necessitating variable hours, irregular work-flow and/or client facing roles involving travel often used telework to ‘*juggle*’ these responsibilities. Several women with children who conducted telework within ‘*high pressure*’ roles often stated that they ‘*couldn’t manage*’ without it. Although the organisation compelled them to use childcare during contracted hours, women performing demanding roles were resigned to the inevitability of deadlines or client interactions resulting in unpredictable evening or weekend work. Consequently, where women with children conducted high pressure work with an unpredictable workflow, their level of integration could be extreme. This was particularly common in independent roles, demonstrated by the following example:

*‘I remember when one of the kids was a baby trying to sort out something and breast feeding at the same time. I had a document in one hand and a baby in the other! There was someone on the phone, there was the washing machine going (laughs)’ (Teleworker, internal-independent role, female - Local-Gov)*

Second, integration strategies were commonly used to manage childcare by women performing lower-level roles, particularly when families were dependent on their income. Income dependency most often accompanied a single-parent status or reliance on a combined income *'to make ends meet'*. In particular, where children were young and/or women faced a long commute, which in two cases followed the relocation of their partners' employment, extended childcare could be a prohibitive expense, making telework a restricted choice. However, these teleworkers were generally very grateful for telework which allowed them to manage their life and retain their job (discussed below). However, if their compulsion to prioritise family over work prevented them from suitably reciprocating for this benefit these teleworkers experienced guilt. Furthermore, they were fearful even if they felt others understood their need to telework, that their arrangement may be revoked if they failed to demonstrate *'good teleworker'* behaviour which involved maintaining flexibility toward work. Consequently, when women were able to use their time flexibly to cater for family demands they did so alongside work demands where possible. Furthermore they were keen to emphasise that they always *'made up time later'* and often felt compelled to work additional hours to demonstrate their commitment.

In both scenarios women described how family members did not appreciate work *'invading'* their home. Complaints about work equipment included one teleworker's husband threatening to *'smash'* his wife's BlackBerry. Family members sometimes asserted their presence and resisted work *'invading'* their domestic environment by purposefully interrupting teleworkers while they worked. The following example occurred during one research interview conducted by telephone:

*Researcher – 'How would you describe the impact of teleworking on your career?'*

*Participant – 'I have to confess Amanda I missed that because my son just came and spoke to me.'*

*Researcher – 'Does having the kids around make it difficult to work?'*

*Participant – ‘erm, yes it can do. Like just happened then, my son will just come and talk to me when I’m on a call and he can see I’m on a call. I think maybe it’s about the mum thing, you know, he expects me, because I’m his mum, to answer him. I saw him out of the corner of my eye ‘cos he’s my boy. I honestly think he thinks, “oh God! Mum’s here” and as much as he loves me he’s thinking, “Oh I want to watch Top Gear on TV and she’s sitting in my favourite place and I want my own TV place” or whatever, I’ve probably disrupted his routine haven’t I?’ (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Tel-Com)*

Consequently, some women employed segmentation strategies which involved restricting the amount of work they performed in the home, either to reduce overwork or, very often, to prevent children and partners from perceiving that they ‘*came second*’ to their job. Such segmentation strategies were employed in three notable circumstances. First, those with high labour market strength sought negotiated arrangements which guaranteed their personal flexibility and allowed them to proactively manage their workplace interactions (discussed below). These teleworkers’ relatively high incomes meant that they generally perceived conducting telework as a personal choice rather than a necessity as paid childcare was obtainable. However, it is notable that while most women on negotiated agreements perceived a free choice economically, many felt emotionally compelled to personally care for their children. For example:

*‘I’d worked at home previously after my son was born and then I returned to the office. But in the office of course you run over. Once a friend picked him up from the childcare and apparently he was asking for me. That was it. I was in pieces, I felt so guilty. I should have picked him up. So I had to make the choice, I just couldn’t do it’ (Teleworker, technical-team, female - Tel-Com)*

These women opted to work around their children. However, some also described how the demands of their job role meant that some additional work-based flexibility was ‘*inevitable*’ in order to maintain satisfactory performance. To manage work demands they planned work

interactions in advance where possible, performed unavoidable work '*after the children had gone to bed*' and exercised spatial flexibility only when '*necessary*'.

Second, several women in demanding roles had considered these segmentation strategies unworkable and reported having changed job role in order to accommodate telework more comfortably:

*'I used to telework in my old job, but everyone did and it was a different kind of arrangement and you had to be very flexible. If I didn't have the kids and I still had my old job, I'd have to travel more and work a lot more hours. In many ways having the kids ensures that your hours are quite standard. I used to have the same job as my husband, but after the kids I re-prioritised, and was luckily able to take on a role that made the guaranteed home-working possible. It was a bit of a demotion but I couldn't do this in my old job as it's too unpredictable. It wasn't a hard decision' (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Tel-Com)*

Unable to rectify the demands of her job and domestic responsibilities, the teleworker had moved from an external-independent role where telework was common into a non-technical team where telework was atypical. Performing atypical telework enabled the teleworker to negotiate guaranteed flexibility as the team was primarily office-based and team members could '*cover*' if necessary.

Third, some women requested telework out of personal necessity but opted to separate their work from their non-work life by sticking to their paid hours. One pivotal condition separating these women from those who conducted telework out of personal necessity, outlined above, was the presence and high earning status of a partner. Where their partner retained a high status job women often considered personally providing childcare or even continuing to work as their personal choice. It is notable that in several cases women with children described continuing paid work as '*keeping something for me*'. These women generally perceived a required trade-off of career progression for this privilege. As a result, while they were grateful for telework, they were unwilling to compromise the flexibility that they felt they had '*paid for*'. This perception was also evident among those who had

changed role to accommodate guaranteed flexibility through telework, discussed previously. Furthermore, a number of teleworkers within these conditions had continued to telework once their children had grown up as they had become '*used to*' the practice which now '*suited*' their life.

### **8.3.2 The experience of the teleworking father**

As discussed above, some men cited improvements to their work-family balance as a reason for participating in telework, but in contrast to many of the women interviewed, none of the men interviewed described undertaking primary responsibility for childcare. Consequently, aside from those conducting telework due to ill health, men were generally able to '*go back in*' to the office or restrict telework to avoid family distractions if desired. Furthermore, while women described feeling guilty that their domestic circumstances distracted them from work and vice versa, men felt comparatively little guilt. The exceptions were a number of teleworking men who felt family members perceived them as dismissive or uncaring. However, while teleworking women used strategies to reduce family related guilt, men were less prepared to sacrifice their working time to do so, evidenced by family members feeling ignored by them. Men's unwillingness to compromise their job performance was reflected in the strategies used by men to manage paid work within their domestic environment. Men with families largely described using segmentation strategies while working in the home such as '*closing the door*' and '*training the kids to leave Daddy alone*'. These strategies were made possible for teleworking fathers by two conditions:

First, men demonstrated an underlying perception that any involvement in the domestic realm was an '*added benefit*' for both them and their family. Consequently, they and their families should not jeopardise this '*luxury*' with domestic distractions to the detriment of their work commitments. In many circumstances, rather than being unable to ignore their children, men felt compelled to do so in order to perform well '*for the good of the family*'. They felt it was therefore acceptable to berate family members for disturbing them, especially during calls as it made them appear '*unprofessional*', potentially undermining their image and therefore the family's financial well-being.

Second, male teleworkers' partners, many of whom did not work or had opted to balance their lives to manage domestic demands, recognised the benefit of having a partner at home and reciprocated for this benefit by helping to reduce distractions:

*'My wife accepts the fact that I need to work hard at home. Given my interest in the role and the fact that I am still employed it's worthwhile for her. Being at home reduces my stress levels and helps me to focus and it means I can be available to her more and she appreciates that [...] my wife is very good at keeping the kids separate from me when I'm working so it's not difficult for me to concentrate [...] she's developed this kind of trick that we'll eat early because then you find this kind of natural break between work and doing anything else in the evening so that can help me to make sure I manage my time and I can eat with the kids. (Teleworker, technical team, male - Tel-Com)*

This domestic support resulted in a *'positive experience'* of telework for men who had increased their family involvement and maintained their focus towards work whilst simultaneously being *'looked after'*. The feeling that working in the home environment enhanced their performance together with their willingness to *'block out'* family distractions led many men to feel *'no guilt'* about spending time with their families during quiet periods. Unlike many women who perceived they were *'dragged in'* to domestic duties when teleworking, men appreciated being available to the family during work breaks and liked having the ability to *'drop the kids off somewhere'* or *'run their partner to the shops'*. Men considered that being on hand *'if needed'* was an added *'bonus'* to the family while allowing them to work in their *'preferred environment'* and enhancing their work-life balance by reducing travel.

Furthermore, as teleworking to provide childcare was uncommon and often undesirable among men due to the threat of stigmatisation, their initial access to telework had generally followed job suitability or negotiation based on their high labour market strength. Alternatively, in a number of cases where organisational support for telework was weaker, sympathetic managers supported teleworking fathers' cases for telework or assisted them in concealing it. Men's ability to maintain *'full flexibility'* towards work, regardless of the

presence of children, allowed them to conduct telework informally in a clandestine manner or to perform more easily the requisite ‘good teleworker’ behaviours to help protect their image while conducting formal telework:

*‘When I first took this job it was because I came over from (alternative organisation) and the issue for me was the children. It was just a personal thing, when we were negotiating terms and conditions I said that the children were in school and doing their exams and I didn’t want to move the family so I asked for two days a week at home, but I’m flexible on that if need be.’ (Teleworker, internal-independent role, male - Tel-Com)*

Importantly, as discussed above, women with children often perceived themselves as ‘selfish’ for either remaining in the office or ignoring their children when teleworking. By contrast, for men with children, remaining office-based was regarded as normal and using telework ‘for the good of the family’ was considered to be ‘selfless’, legitimising their work-directed flexibility while at home in the eyes of family members.

#### **8.4 Teleworkers’ experiences and outcomes: A typology of voluntary teleworkers.**

Telework is widely recognised to be a heterogeneous practice which results in diverse experiences for those who participate in it (Dimitrova, 2003). However, a lack of clarity exists over how different experiences of telework emerge. Analysis revealed that the nature and classification of a teleworking arrangement (i.e. ‘official’ – formal or ‘unofficial’ - informal), and teleworkers’ experiences of telework were determined by three related factors. These were: teleworkers’ motivation for teleworking; the level of support teleworkers received; and teleworkers approach to defending their arrangement and preferred outcomes. Analysis of these factors revealed six broad categories of teleworker, outlined below and presented in the Table 8.1. (A summary of the numbers of identified types is presented in Appendix 8)



#### 8.4.1 ‘Enhancers’ – When telework is beneficial for a role or task

‘Enhancers’ performed telework to maximise their personal performance and described doing *‘whatever it takes’* to *‘get the job done’*. Enhancers perceived their level of telework as beneficial to the organisation and organisational support for telework as strong. As ambitious employees they maintained *‘full flexibility’* towards work to protect their outcomes. Rather than suffering professional isolation, Enhancers felt that teleworking was recognised to enhance their performance, and was therefore essential to meeting professional obligations and personal career goals.

Enhancers performed telework either formally or informally depending on what was *‘normal’* or *‘favoured’* within their job role or organisational environment. *‘Unofficial’* Enhancers worked in environments where informal telework was prevalent and described teleworking to concentrate on specific *‘focused’* tasks, complete work *‘after hours’*, or to manage their personal life *‘around their work’*. Telework enabled these employees to *‘do what is required’* and was therefore seen as essential for the business and acceptable to managers and peers, who also had the option to telework informally. The extent of appropriate telework was determined by the nature of tasks in what one teleworking manager described as a *‘sliding scale of jobs’*:

*‘There is no doubt in my mind that some roles can have more homeworking but it’s on a kind of scale. Some jobs you can do nearly 100%, some 50% and loads of jobs fall somewhere in the middle. Some less, my current role I could probably do 20-30% at home, it’s about the tasks.’ (Teleworker, internal-independent role, male - Tel-Com)*

As outlined above, those in independent roles and technical teams felt able to conduct telework more extensively than those in non-technical teams. Importantly, where the organisation favoured informal telework, an *‘unofficial’* status enabled Enhancers to project a high level of work-directed flexibility while sometimes still conducting extensive telework. To emphasise their flexibility some unofficial Enhancers described themselves as *‘too ambitious’* to be an *‘official’* teleworker and suggested that *‘they’* (referring to formal teleworkers) were comparatively less flexible and available. Consequently, to avoid

stigmatisation, challenge and professional consequences, unofficial Enhancers were inclined to avoid the financial benefits which accompanied formal telework (discussed below).

'Official' Enhancers were identified primarily at High-Tech and in independent roles and distributed collaborative teams. Although these teleworkers could remain office-based if desired, an 'official' teleworking status did not detract from their projected image of flexibility and therefore 'made no difference' to professional outcomes. These Enhancers often considered formal telework to be a legitimate and beneficial option as it was accompanied by financial benefits:

*'The job profile comes first and that affects where you are, the title doesn't really matter, I'm not even particularly sure how many of my team are teleworkers by contract, we're all over the place anyway, and it makes sense for me to do it because of the allowance and paid travel'*  
(Teleworker, external-independent role, male - High-Tech)

Importantly for official Enhancers, a formal teleworking status was acquired not to restrict their flexibility towards work but for practicality. However, again, the greater the suitability of telework within the role with respect to enhancing performance (discussed in Chapter 5), the more telework Enhancers could perform during standard working hours without experiencing negative professional consequences.

The ubiquity of remote working technologies which accompanied the normative acceptability of telework led Enhancers to use their 'armoury of tools' to keep on top of work, nip problems in the bud and 'attack' unexpected tasks 'there and then'. For some this propensity to work 'as and when required' resulted in them maintaining an extensive online presence among colleagues:

*Participant – 'There are often people on line at 2 o'clock in the morning. When I was in the US a couple of weeks ago it's 5 hours difference, I'd be on line until 5 and 6 o'clock (pm) local time and they over here would still be on line, it's obsessive sometimes [...] you can't get away from it.'*

*Researcher – ‘Do you feel pressure to respond to something if it comes in after hours?’*

*Participant – ‘Oh absolutely. Yeah, I often do whether it’s 7, 8, 9, 10 o’clock I will respond immediately, people expect you to do it’  
(Teleworker, technical team, male - High-Tech)’*

In addition to temporal flexibility, Enhancers often demonstrated extensive spatial flexibility, changing their location at the ‘*drop of a hat*’ to meet the needs of the business. Furthermore, despite peers and managers being forthcoming with information, many still felt required to make a ‘*special effort*’ to keep abreast of developments elsewhere in the organisation as they recognised that separation could result in missed opportunities. In particular, those in internal-independent roles described maintaining a ‘*great deal*’ of presence to keep momentum and authority for their initiatives. One official Enhancer commented that there were ‘*no guarantees where your week will end up*’. However, to perform at a high level, overwork was considered inevitable and, despite consistently conveying a work-life balance too heavily weighted towards work, Enhancers appreciated the extra flexibility and stress relief telework provided:

*‘It’s more comfortable and easy if you’re at home. If I’m in an office, I know I’m at work. We work very long hours and the work is still going to be there wherever you are. If you tried to do it all in the office, you’d never be at home [...] I find it reduces stress having the technology that enables me to do what I need and it helps me to avoid surprises.’  
(Teleworker, technical-team, male - Tel-Com)*

Despite perceiving their work-life balance as challenging, a number of Enhancers suggested that managing their personal lives improved with time and experience. In particular, those who were encouraged to take ‘*down-time*’ felt that advancement was possible without ‘*killing yourself*’ by working effectively in the home environment, managing others’ perceptions and expectations, and ‘*learning when to stop*’. Established Enhancers described how they had learnt to conduct more of their communications online and felt that being available when required was more important than continually displaying availability. In

some cases, this approach had enabled Enhancers to increase the acceptable amount of time spent teleworking.

While maintaining office attendance generally prevented social isolation for many Enhancers, it could still be a drawback for some. Those performing external-independent roles and distributed team members, who conducted frequent telework and whose peers and managers were unlikely to be in the office when they attended, experienced social isolation to the greatest extent. However, most considered isolated working to be *'inevitable'* and felt that having peers in *'the same boat'* reduced isolation by incentivising colleagues to communicate frequently and to plan meetings when in the office. Furthermore, Enhancers who performed frequent telework communicated with peers and managers constantly online as being able to *'benchmark'* their performance against others reduced ambiguity and enhanced their motivation to achieve targets.

Finally, as their level of telework was considered *'acceptable'* and *'normal'* and Enhancers were willing to *'put the job first'* their teleworking remained largely unchallenged by others in the organisation who often worked, or had the option to work, in the same way. Some described how telework was unaffected by numerous changes in manager and how they had appreciated their new manager's efforts to establish a relationship and find complementary ways of working:

*Researcher - 'How does your new manager feel about you teleworking?'*

*Participant - 'There's no difference, it doesn't matter, I'm never in the office so for me there is no difference. I've had nine managers in nine years. It's fine as long as they manage the workflow, you both adapt quickly and often your new manager will pay you a visit which helps start things off well' (Teleworker, external-independent role, male - High-Tech).*

Furthermore, as their teleworking arrangement was considered beneficial, where Enhancers encountered *'unhelpful'* behaviour from others they felt legitimate in highlighting this to *'relevant parties'* and confident that the perpetrators would be suitably *'dealt with'*.

#### 8.4.2 ‘Balancers’ – Where telework is negotiated out of preference

‘Balancers’ performed telework formally in environments where formal telework was uncommon. Balancers often worked within proximately located teams and had leveraged their high labour market strength to negotiate telework in order to enhance their quality of life/experiences of work by ensuring some guaranteed personal flexibility. Even though formal telework for these employees was not considered ‘*ideal*’, especially if informal telework was favoured in their environment, they still considered their continued employment through telework as beneficial to both themselves and the organisation and therefore felt that it received strong organisational support. The challenge for Balancers was to enact strategies to manage their work and non-work lives while retaining the ‘*added value*’ from their retention for the organisation on which the acceptability of their arrangement was based. To this end, Balancers often ‘*compromised*’ by splitting the time saved from not commuting between work and non-work activities. In general, they considered themselves to be more productive and less stressed, and experienced telework as a ‘*big improvement*’ within both their work and non-work life.

Balancers commonly experienced improvements in time management and in particular they appreciated the opportunity to manage interactions by simply turning off the phone, setting their IM to ‘busy’ and waiting until particular points in the day to answer emails. Consequently, while Balancers considered their contribution to be valuable they also recognised that non-teleworking or ‘*unofficially*’ teleworking peers were prepared to demonstrate comparatively greater work-directed flexibility. Remaining office-based was described as enabling peers to ‘*get ahead*’ which indicated acceptance that by teleworking they were unlikely to achieve the same professional advancement. However, rather than considering themselves to be professionally isolated, Balancers felt that purposely guaranteeing their non-work flexibility through ‘*official*’ telework was preferable to participating in ‘*unofficial*’ telework which would not guarantee the level of flexibility desired. More specifically, Balancers improved their work and non-work experiences by consciously and overtly reducing the spatial and temporal flexibility required of them from their own and others’ perspectives. Some had reached their ‘*desired level*’ and in some cases did not want to detract from the enjoyment of ‘*core tasks*’ by taking on additional responsibilities:

*'I kind of took a value judgement a few years ago which was, "so long as my pay is reasonable and I have an interesting job and I feel self-rewarded with it, then getting to the top of the greasy pole is not necessarily one of my priorities." I have a couple of younger people who are exactly the opposite of that and they need the rapid exposure in order to build a skill set and they certainly couldn't do that if they were working from home.'* (Teleworker, manager of office-based technical-team, male - Tel-Com)

For others, in particular teleworking parents, purposeful career curtailment was directed primarily at enhancing their domestic life. In some cases Balancers felt that official telework prevented stigmatisation by making limited progression less visible or hiding atypical work. For example, one Balancer felt that official telework prevented what she called *'empty chair syndrome'* when she needed to start late or leave early. Another felt telework hid her part-time status which she perceived was more detrimental than telework to others' perceptions of her commitment and ambition. Finally, Balancers felt that recognition for current performance was *'no issue'* but to progress in the future they would have to demonstrate more personal flexibility by relinquishing not only their formal teleworker status but sometimes their role:

*'I don't think telework is necessarily the issue. I don't think I could get promoted in my current role and a promotion into another role would probably be an office-based role which goes with whether you want to be promoted to that role or not. So if you are a teleworker and want to stay a teleworker the option may not exist. It's just a choice that you have to make. I choose to be a teleworker as I want to be involved in my family, but later that may change.'* (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Tel-Com)

Balancers considered colleagues' support to be essential to the success of their arrangement for two reasons. First, they recognised that in order to optimise their flexibility, others were required to alter their working practices by conducting a greater amount of remote communication, especially where there were high levels of team interdependency.

Consequently, some Balancers described benefitting from pro-actively facilitating adequate communication with colleagues. This was especially important when interacting with non-peer level colleagues and/or where online communication was unpopular. Strategies for enhancing communication included proactive contact to ‘avoid surprises’; providing information, such as re-sending meeting notes in advance of meetings; constructing ‘norms of communication’ which involved agreeing on ‘core’ available times; and communicating their environmental conditions and any performance issues to colleagues to reduce ambiguity.

Second, Balancers sometimes relied on non-teleworkers to do ‘favours’, assisting them with tasks and arranging meetings sensitively to reduce their required presence. However, as their telework was recognised as beneficial to the organisation and they felt they had legitimately ‘traded-off’ professional advancement for increased personal flexibility, they perceived non-teleworking colleagues as required to ‘make an effort’ to help. Consequently, they learned which face-to-face meetings were essential and described electronic communication as adequate at other times. Presence was considered essential only at client meetings, important team meetings, and meetings involving ‘sensitive’ or ‘emotional issues’, especially with respect to subordinates. As such, they felt that it was legitimate to ‘push back’ against those who ‘unnecessarily’ attempted to increase their physical presence at other times:

*‘You do have to work differently and I guess at first some people aren’t too keen on it. But there’s a myriad of ways to communicate now which I think enhances working from home. It’s unnecessary to have to travel so much these days, so there’s no excuse really. Of course people will try and get you into the office. But if it’s not absolutely necessary you have to either speak to them very nicely or, failing that just say no I can’t be there at 5 in the afternoon on a Friday but I will dial in instead.’ (Teleworker, technical-team, female - Tel-Com)*

Balancers’ high skills and valued experience led them to feel that they could rely on inclusion in such meetings, regardless of physical attendance, as there were often few substitutes for their input. Furthermore, the comparative enhancement of professional

outcomes for colleagues who maintained higher work-directed flexibility was felt to provide colleagues with an incentive to facilitate, or at least not undermine their teleworking arrangement. They described how peers benefitted from enhanced visibility to managers and subordinates from autonomy, increased networking capacity and exposure to senior levels of management. Consequently, there was a feeling among Balancers that peer-level non-teleworkers' feelings of inequity or animosity should be offset by their often overt acceptance of the comparative curtailment of their rewards and career.

Where their manager had personally sanctioned their arrangement, Balancers unsurprisingly considered them supportive of it. However, they described a necessary period of adjustment where managers learned to communicate differently and *'focus on results'*. Most felt this got easier with time and appreciated their manager's efforts to keep them *'in the loop'*. Finally, where Balancers experienced a change in manager after their teleworking arrangement had been established, some encountered opposition or recognised a new manager's preference for office working. However, as managers in these circumstances were often compelled to *'tolerate'* telework, Balancers felt their new manager would *'get used to it'*. In particular, understanding managers' concerns and being flexible was felt to aid this transition.

#### **8.4.3 'Reciprocators' - Where telework is provided for personal needs**

'Reciprocators' performed telework where it was uncommon and/or considered unsuited to the job role and teleworked on formal arrangements to accommodate a recognised and personally-felt need. Consequently, they perceived their continued employment through telework to be supported by the organisation as a personal concession rather than as providing *'added value'* to the business. Somewhat counter-intuitively, these employees often went to great pains to display *'good teleworker'* behaviour and felt that others recognised their effort. The aim was to enhance their utility, display performance and maintain availability both out of gratitude and to protect their on-going arrangement and therefore their job security:

*'I am incredibly grateful to Tel-Com as they have provided me with the only means to manage my life [...] I will go out of my way to make the*



*situation work for them as much as possible' (Teleworker, internal-standardised, female - Tel-Com)*

Paradoxically, maintaining availability could detract substantially from Reciprocators' work-life balance, restricting the very flexibility that they required. Furthermore, the non-work restrictions within Reciprocators' lives made enacting work-directed flexibility challenging. In particular, as outlined previously, while maintaining availability by phone and email was possible for these employees, 'coming in' was often extremely difficult. However, in order to maintain a positive image, Reciprocators explained how they made 'every effort' to be as 'flexible as possible', even where this caused high levels of stress. A particular issue was enacting unplanned flexibility when caring for dependants. Some Reciprocators felt that colleagues were especially unsympathetic to their need to provide childcare:

*'I'm supposed to be in the office on Wednesdays so I have alternative arrangements on that day, but of course meetings get arranged at all times [...] I want people to know that I'm committed to making (the arrangement) work and that I can still perform. If I'm not flexible, well it doesn't look good on me. So I try and the whole time I'm thinking "oh my God how am I going to pick up the kids you know, I think "oh my God!" sometimes I've been so stressed about it' (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Tel-Com)'*

Even where colleagues were perceived to be 'sympathetic', Reciprocators often felt 'forgotten' in both professional and social interactions unless they constantly asserted their presence. From a professional standpoint, one Reciprocator in a non-technical team suggested that keeping up with office-based colleagues' interactions and decisions was 'useless' as people would just 'deal with things' in their absence.

*'They might not think to involve you because you're at home and you find that you weren't included in a decision or something just 'cos you weren't there, so it's not always intentional but sometimes that can be frustrating because you can't join in. I've attended meetings where they're all talking*

*about a meeting that happened previously and I didn't know about it so you can't contribute to the same extent, no.'* (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Tel-Com)

While they '*struggled*' to maintain current performance and availability to defend their arrangement Reciprocators accepted professional isolation as inevitable. The scarcity of telework within their role or environment meant that peers had limited understanding of what teleworking involved and considered Reciprocators to be inflexible or less valuable, despite their attempts to remain flexible. For example, some Reciprocators described their annoyance at being asked if they slept in or watched daytime TV which they felt devalued their contribution to the team or organisation. From a social standpoint, those in standardised roles in particular valued their colleagues' friendship and support. Disparaging comments or exclusion by colleagues could be hurtful and isolating. However, Reciprocators often accepted the blame, especially for social exclusion:

*'you do get left out of things, a few of them might go to the pictures after work as they all live in (head office location) and I won't go because I'd have an hour and a half drive. It's my fault because I have the children, but they don't invite me to stuff like that. I used to go as I am a very social person, but that's it's just the way it is, isn't it?'* (Teleworker, internal-standardised role, female - Tel-Com)

Despite experiencing social isolation those conducting need-based telework were restricted to the home '*anyway*'. Consequently, one teleworker suggested that their isolation would be '*a lot worse*' if they did not telework as retaining their employment enabled them to remain connected to the organisation. However, despite their acceptance of the drawbacks in their current situation, a number of Reciprocators suggested that in different circumstances they would rather '*come back in*' to improve prospects and '*get their life back*', or at least work closer to home.

#### 8.4.4 ‘Appeasers’ – Where continued telework is conditional on acceptable behaviour

‘Appeasers’ were ambitious employees who, despite feeling that organisational support for telework was lacking, considered telework to be beneficial to their performance, suited to their tasks and therefore, beneficial to the organisation. What distinguished Appeasers from Enhancers was a requirement to seek a formal teleworking status which made avoiding identification and stigmatisation challenging. Despite their formal teleworking status, Appeasers felt it necessary to remain fully flexible towards work in the eyes of others to deflect challenge. Remaining flexible involved reducing the amount of telework they performed as, due to the organisation’s desire for visibility, *‘too much’* telework did not *‘look good’*:

*‘Theoretically I am supposed to be able to telework when the opportunity presents itself. I hate the open plan. For the tasks I perform I would like to work at home about 50% of the time, but I probably manage about 10% with no problems. You are supposed to be visible and I was required to reduce my amount of teleworking as it was thought by the powers that be to be inappropriate. I don’t necessarily agree, but I can’t really argue as I value my career’ (Teleworker, internal-independent role, male, Local-Gov)*

Appeasers were cast into an *‘inevitable out-group’* due to the lower prevalence of formal telework within their environment. Common complaints were colleagues unfairly perceiving them as *‘lazy and uncommitted’* and *‘performing less or inferior work’*. Appeasers managed negative perceptions by assuming responsibility for educating others about the benefits of telework. One participant remarked *‘it’s up to me to show people that telework works in this job’*.

Appeasers educated others in three ways. First, they *‘made a case for telework’* by expounding higher level business benefits such as reduced costs. Second, they demonstrated to peers and anxious managers that they were committed and trustworthy by identifying undesirable behaviours and traits in *‘bad teleworkers’*. They acknowledged that *‘never coming in’*; *‘being unavailable’*; and *‘imposing flexibility on others’* resulted in the

deserved revocation of telework, an acknowledgement which communicated their motivation to act in the opposite manner to avoid consequences. Third, Appeasers enacted '*good teleworker*' behaviour by displaying impression management and pro-active contact alongside '*appeasement behaviour*'. '*Appeasement behaviour*' included constant availability and contactability; '*coming in*' not only when required but regularly; and doing '*favours*' for non-teleworking peers by taking on '*extra*' or '*less desirable*' tasks or '*covering*' for their leave. Furthermore, some described using office time to '*catch up*' with people and to make their interactions a '*positive experience*' by being '*engaging*' and '*cheerful*'. While Appeasers performed these behaviours to protect themselves from professional isolation, performing them on top of core tasks could increase working hours and reduce their time spent teleworking within core hours.

Enacting appeasing behaviours also did not guarantee the protection of professional outcomes. In particular, even where managers and peers could be appeased, challenges sometimes came directly from others such as senior management or support staff. Appeasers often described experiencing direct opposition from non-teleworkers including '*intentional ignoring*', '*undermining comments*' and criticism over participation, availability and clarity. As Appeasers' arrangements were agreed individually with their manager they often put these perceptions down to others' ignorance or jealousy. To protect themselves from such challenges Appeasers described habitually '*copying people in*' to emails to '*make conversations visible*'. Establishing an '*audit trail*' was felt to protect Appeasers from criticism in the absence of witnesses. '*Copying in*' was not exclusive to Appeasers as many teleworkers compensated for the lack of visible/audible conversations in this manner. However, Appeasers used this strategy extensively due to the constant threat of resistance.

Finally, while Appeasers often perceived their manager as supportive, they recognised the pressure placed on managers to ensure teleworking '*caused no problems*' in an unsupportive environment, which reduced their ability to protect teleworking subordinates from challenges:

*'My manager worries and sometimes insists we need to make sure my teleworking is managed and we all see each other enough and everything.'*

*To be fair, I wouldn't have teleworking without her though. I think her main concern is that the head of division loathes it and she worries that supporting me will make her look bad if it goes wrong.'* (Teleworker, non-technical team, male - Tel-Com)

Furthermore, Appeasers were dubious of their arrangement's impact on their career progression following a change in manager or environmental conditions. Some Appeasers were prepared to continue formally teleworking and enact greater work-directed flexibility than was required of non-teleworking peers in the hope that improved job performance would endear others to telework and aid progression. However, this realisation led others to consider that continuing to telework would result in the same or reduced professional outcomes, regardless of enacted work-directed flexibility, and ceased to telework '*officially*' to prevent challenges and improve their prospects. Furthermore, in an attempt to achieve a balance, some Appeasers opted to '*come back in*' voluntarily in exchange for being allowed to retain their teleworking equipment to telework informally for '*suitable tasks*'.

#### **8.4.5 'Avoiders' – Where continued telework is conditional on concealment**

'Avoiders' perceived that telework lacked support within their organisation or role but wished to increase their non-work flexibility by teleworking while trying to reduce the unfavourable consequences of doing so. In environments where informal telework was favoured, conducting occasional '*unofficial*' telework only for '*appropriate tasks*' was generally advisable for employees wishing to avoid undesirable professional consequences. However, within environments where organisational support for telework was weak, the amount of telework considered '*appropriate*' was minimal. Employees able to access telework who wished to perform it regularly to enhance non-work flexibility often felt it necessary to stay '*under the radar*' to avoid challenge. Appeasing others or overtly defending telework, discussed below, to protect outcomes was anticipated to result in undesirable personal or professional trade-offs. Consequently, Avoiders played down their participation in telework, conducting more than the '*optimum*' amount but hiding this from others in an attempt to reduce undesirable outcomes. In some cases Avoiders even disassociated themselves from the practice entirely:

*Researcher – ‘How long have you been a teleworker?’*

*Participant – ‘I am not a teleworker’*

*Researcher – ‘Do you ever work from home?’*

*Participant – ‘Er, yes, probably about once or twice a week on average, but I’m not a teleworker’ (Teleworker, non-technical team, male – Tel-Com)*

While this teleworkers’ description of their working practices appears contradictory, the participant’s strong disassociation with the label ‘teleworker’ illustrates a desire to avoid the challenges associated with this label.

Avoiders most worked within non-technical teams where teleworking without ‘good reason’ was considered unacceptable. In particular, fathers who were unwilling or unable to negotiate formal telework but wanted to spend more time with their family were present in this category, due to their perceptions of the unavailability of teleworking arrangements for childcare. Unsurprisingly, conducting extensive informal telework reduced employees’ visibility within the organisation. On the one hand, reduced visibility alleviated the pressure to progress, helping teleworkers to manage their non-work life and prevented challenges from above:

*‘I’m happy with the flexibility I have now, I like being at home and able to see my family. I think I probably choose the bare minimum of acceptable flexibility at the moment and that suits me fine. I don’t want to get myself into a position where I work 80 hour weeks and don’t see my kids. But organisations expect everyone to be eager to climb the career ladder and if you’re not super ambitious then there’s something wrong with you. Telework means I can do my job and not worry I’m suddenly going to have to take on more because I’m doing such a good job. I want to remain in the status quo until my children are a bit older.’ (Teleworker, non-technical team, male - Tel-Com).*

However, on the other hand, while Avoiders suggested that being overlooked for promotion was inevitable, avoiding the office could also detract from current performance. More specifically, despite managers helping to '*hide*' Avoiders' telework, they could also field urgent or important tasks to proximately located subordinates, and forget to include Avoiders in communications. Avoiders also encountered direct criticism from peers and subordinates for '*not pulling their weight*' and felt these colleagues purposefully sought information and interaction from more proximate substitutes. Consequently, in addition to being overlooked by managers, Avoiders felt excluded by peers. Exclusion was particularly frustrating where teleworkers relied on non-teleworkers for help and information:

*Participant - 'I had a problem with someone who I was relying on. I said to her," can you make sure that somebody receives this, and it goes to the right place" - she said "yes yes yes"... and then she went on holiday and of course it never happened.'*

*Researcher – 'Was it a mistake?'*

*Participant 'She could have done it on purpose, or perhaps she's just not very good at her job, anyway, whichever, I got the bullet for that and of course it was used to undermine my homeworking, another reason why I should be in the office. Of course I'm a lot more careful who I ask for help now.' (Teleworker, non-technical team, male - Local-Gov)*

Consequently, witnessing or experiencing neglectful, unhelpful or undermining behaviour reduced teleworkers' trust in non-teleworkers. In response, Avoiders were reticent in admitting difficulty in attending meetings or completing work in case it provided non-teleworkers with '*ammunition*' to '*tell tales*' to managers and aimed to be as '*self-sufficient*' as possible. They also preferred to '*keep themselves to themselves*', providing little information about their movements and commitments. For example, one Avoider habitually entered his time at home into his diary as '*busy*' or '*confidential*' to disguise his location. Strategies of self-reliance had two notable consequences. First, Avoiders often complained of social isolation as they felt restricted in the amount they were able to interact with others

for fear of *'reminding them'* that they teleworked. Second, Avoiders felt that self-reliance contributed to further exclusion from non-teleworkers.

Finally, Avoiders perceived their teleworking arrangement as vulnerable to challenge from both peers and managers, especially following a change of manager or environmental conditions. Consequently, when Avoiders inherited managers they either increased their time spent in the office or stayed *'under the radar'* to an even greater extent:

*'My manager doesn't know how much (teleworking) I do and I don't remind him. I try and keep my head down as much as possible really and don't give him cause to remember' (Teleworker, internal-independent role, male – Tel-Com)*

This strategy could further reduce their recognition and contribute to diminished peer and non-peer relationships when teleworking regularly, inciting direct challenges.

#### **8.4.6 'Retainers' – Where continued telework is reliant on external support**

'Retainers' performed formal telework to improve their work and non-work lives and, despite recognising low organisational support for their teleworking arrangement, they were unprepared to compromise their flexibility. In some cases, the organisation, managers and colleagues had previously supported the teleworking arrangement, but changing environmental conditions or sceptical inheriting managers had weakened others' support of telework, increasing the acceptability of challenges. Challenges were especially evident where formal teleworkers were unprepared to enact expected *'good-teleworker'* behaviours to maintain others' favourable perceptions of their arrangement if this detracted from their personal flexibility:

*'I have suffered some direct opposition. There is a perception that I'm being awkward by choosing to work the hours that I'm paid for' (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Tel-Com).*



For example, one teleworker in a non-technical team explained how peers had remarked to a new manager that she was uncooperative and difficult to contact. However, while a number of teleworkers had returned to the office when instructed, some opted to ‘fight’ to retain their ‘official’ arrangement. Teleworkers’ willingness to ‘fight’ to protect their teleworking arrangement and their flexibility arose from three identified conditions. First, teleworkers sometimes believed that they had raised the acceptability of their teleworking arrangement by taking a demotion or making ‘substantial investments’ in it. One teleworker described building a separate office on the side of her home to prevent interruptions. The commitment to conducting ‘good telework’ communicated by this substantial personal investment led the teleworker to perceive not only that she was ‘owed’ telework but was legitimate in contesting her managers’ attempts to withdraw it. Second, some teleworkers had come to rely on their teleworking arrangement. For example, one teleworker initially offered telework for reasons of personal need described how she had subsequently taken on additional personal commitments including local volunteer work and had acquired a pet dog. Third, some Retainers perceived their teleworking arrangement as the most beneficial aspect of their employment with the organisation and would therefore prefer to lose their job than stop teleworking. Consequently, some established teleworkers sought to ‘fight down’ their manager’s attempts to revoke arrangements:

*‘I’ve had a long dispute, a serious attempt to undermine my homeworking because I wouldn’t come in. I was accused of not fulfilling my job because I wasn’t in the office. I said “wait a minute I don’t need to be in the office”, but they have an office mentality. So I want to take some documents home “but you can’t take them out of the office”....”’why not?” “Oh because of data protection” or some other excuse “Well” I said,” we haven’t had any trouble previously now have we? Not for these past few years!” I wouldn’t be here anymore if it wasn’t for this arrangement and I’m damned if I am going to give it up when I know It works perfectly well.’ (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Local-Gov)*

It is notable that in this situation the teleworker perceived she was only able to retain her arrangement with the support of her partner and a trade union. In most cases, teleworkers

on arrangements with low perceived organisational and management support perceived their ability to contest revocation as questionable and several ex-teleworkers explained how their arrangements had been unilaterally revoked.

Regardless of the outcome, Retainers perceived clashes with managers as '*stressful*' and damaging to their working relationships. However, those who opted to telework in order to pursue a preferred lifestyle or working environment frequently suggested that they were '*unconcerned*' with the affective components of their working relationships. Some disliked company politics and the '*constant gossiping*' and '*back-biting*' that occurred within the office, preferring to be '*well out of it*'.

*It's not going to be written on my tombstone 'she was a very good local government officer' but frankly, I've got other things to do with my life! [...] I'm a bit of a maverick. I tend to come in and go out I don't tend to settle down really here. Senior management do tend to be very dedicated to having people in the office, but I'm fine on my arrangement and it's where I intend to stay.'* (Teleworker, non-technical team, female - Local-Gov)

Retainers consequently perceived diminished workplace relationships as '*well worth the sacrifice*' if they managed to retain their arrangement and accepted that they were required to concede '*inevitable professional consequences*'. One Retainer remarked that while recognition and career advancement would have been appreciated, they were unsurprised that colleagues had been '*promoted all around them*'. However, unlike Balancers, opting to forgo promotion was not considered enough to protect Retainers' arrangement. While successfully retaining an arrangement provided a level of '*retained acceptability*' that could restrict future challenges within current conditions, these arrangements were particularly vulnerable to changing environmental conditions. In one extreme example, when a Retainer refused to '*come back in*' they were selected for redundancy. While the organisation firmly maintains that the selection was unrelated to telework, a number of participants felt it to be a heavily influential factor. Visible consequences sent a strong message to other teleworkers that continuing to perform undesirable telework within the organisation was unadvisable. Consequently, fighting to retain a teleworking arrangement was only generally attempted if

the teleworker was willing to face dismissal, to forgo progression, was not financially reliant on their employment, and/or was supported by a trade union.

Typology of Voluntary Teleworkers	
<p><b>Enhancer:</b></p> <p><i>Motivation – Performance</i></p> <p><i>Support: Conditional on enhancing performance</i></p> <p><i>Defending outcomes</i></p> <p>Flexibility used primarily for work and recognised as performance enhancing.</p> <p><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>Improved performance Improved professional outcomes Comparatively enhanced work-life balance (to non-teleworking peers) Positive working relationships</p>	<p><b>Appeaser:</b></p> <p><i>Motivation – Performance</i></p> <p><i>Support: Conditional on causing no problems</i></p> <p><i>Defending outcomes</i></p> <p>Excessive flexibility, championing telework</p> <p><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>Potential for Improved performance Uncertain professional outcomes Comparatively reduced work-life balance (to non-teleworking peers) Strained relationships</p>
<p><b>Balancer:</b></p> <p><i>Motivation – Preferred Lifestyle</i></p> <p><i>Support: Conditional on beneficial skill retention</i></p> <p><i>Defending arrangement</i></p> <p>Accepted professional trade-off Proactive management</p> <p><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>Maintained performance Accepted professional outcomes Guaranteed personal flexibility/ enhanced work-life balance Positive relationships - management and compromise necessary</p>	<p><b>Avoider:</b></p> <p><i>Motivation – Preferred Lifestyle</i></p> <p><i>Support: Conditional on concealing telework</i></p> <p><i>Defending arrangement</i></p> <p>Hiding telework, entering the office</p> <p><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>Diminished performance Professional isolation (sidelined) Potential for small improvements in work-life balance Diminished relationships through distrust/neglect</p>
<p><b>Reciprocator:</b></p> <p><i>Motivation – Need</i></p> <p><i>Support: Conditional on need and gratitude</i></p> <p><i>Defending arrangement</i></p> <p>Display gratitude and flexibility</p> <p><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>Potentially diminished performance Professional isolation, Guilt and overwork – detracts from work life balance Gratitude due to reliance Diminished relationships / social isolation</p>	<p><b>Retainer:</b></p> <p><i>Motivation – Preferred Lifestyle</i></p> <p><i>Support – Requires external support</i></p> <p><i>Defending arrangement</i></p> <p>‘Push back’ against demands on flexibility</p> <p><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>Diminished performance Professional Isolation Improved work environment Improved work-life balance / non-work flexibility Difficult working relationships though challenge and conflict</p>

**Table 8.1: Typology of voluntary teleworkers**

## 8.5 Summary

This chapter has considered teleworkers' reasons for and experiences of performing telework. Telework was conducted either to improve teleworkers' performance and enhance their career prospects or to accommodate their personal needs or preferences. Enhancing performance and accommodating personal needs were generally felt to be acceptable reasons for teleworking. Teleworking to achieve lifestyle improvements required teleworkers to leverage strong labour market strength, the support of a manager or external support once telework was established. A typology of voluntary teleworkers was presented which demonstrated that teleworkers' experiences of telework were determined by their motivation for teleworking, their perceived support for telework and their approach to defending their teleworking arrangement and outcomes. The extent to which telework could improve teleworkers' performance and lifestyle was determined by their role, factors within their non-work environment and their desire and ability to '*push back*' against others' demands on their flexibility.

The following chapter presents a discussion of the empirical findings presented in this chapter and the previous three chapters with respect to the research questions presented in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER 9: Discussion of the findings**

### **9.1 Introduction**

The overarching aim of the thesis is to consider factors which influence the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations. The intention is to shed light on the surprisingly limited uptake of telework in the face of recognised benefits for both organisations and employees (Mahler, 2012). It has been acknowledged that the spread of telework may be stifled by limited supply, even where the practice is available in principle, or by employees' limited demand for the practice (Siha and Monroe, 2006). However, a review of the literature which investigated these factors uncovered mixed findings. It has been suggested that a failure to consider the contextual conditions within which telework is practised limits our understanding of how telework is supplied and experienced among employees (Dimitrova, 2003).

The study set out to fulfil the recognised need to consider multiple levels of analysis (Ellison, 1999, Gajendran and Harrison, 2007) when investigating how employees experience and practise telework. A research framework was constructed through consideration of extant findings which guided the investigation towards the four specific research questions. This chapter relates the empirical data presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 to each of the specific research questions, provides an integrated discussion of the findings, and considers their relevance within the wider teleworking literature. To support the discussion in this chapter a diagram illustrating the process by which telework is introduced, established and re-evaluated is presented in figure 9.1. A summary of the key findings is provided at the end of the chapter.

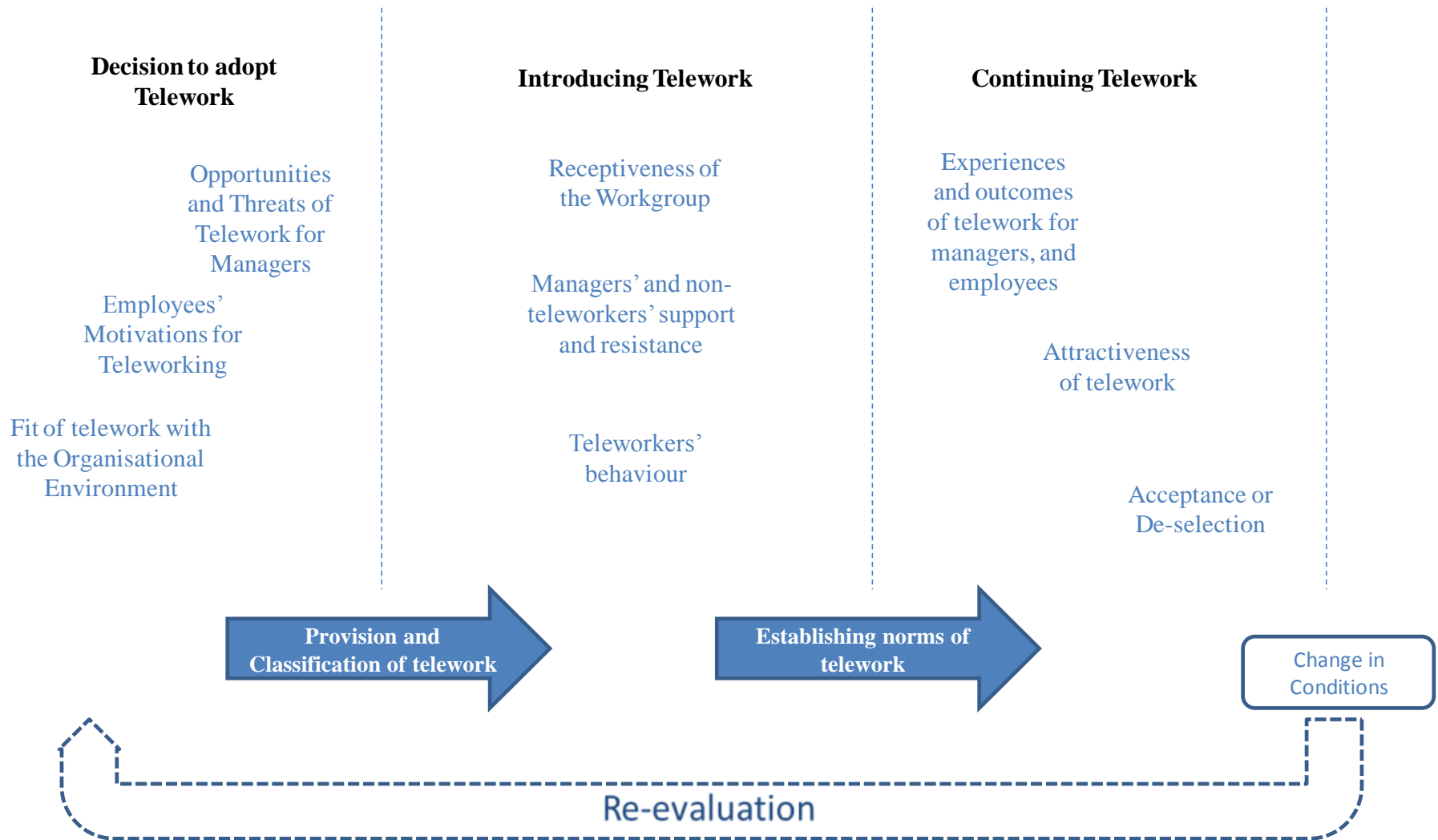


Figure 9.1: The process of establishing and maintaining acceptable telework

## **9.2 Q1. What is the influence of industry, organisational and job-specific factors on the diffusion and practice of teleworking?**

The influence of industry and organisational factors and the presence of specific job roles on the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations have received limited attention. While previous theoretical research has suggested a relationship between these factors (Daniels et al, 2001), empirical evidence is lacking. The study sought to narrow this research gap by gathering data from participants within diverse job roles at three organisations, situated within different industries. Participants were asked to describe their job roles in detail. They were also asked whether they felt telework was desirable within their job, work group, organisation and industry, and were requested to give reasons for their opinions. By collecting and comparing responses from senior managers, lower-level managers and employees, the factors which determined the supply of and demand for telework could be considered simultaneously. Four broad factors were identified, which combined to produce diverse manifestations of telework within the organisations. These were: the strategic use of telework within different job roles; the policies and practices employed within the organisation; the extent to which external pressures and, in particular, trade unions influence the provision and practice of telework; and the overarching influence of organisational and industry norms. These factors and the relationships between them will now be discussed in detail.

### **9.2.1 The strategic use of telework within different job roles**

The first factor which influences the diffusion and practice of telework is the prevalence of different job roles and the purpose for which telework is supplied and practised within these roles. Previous studies which consider how suited teleworking is to different job roles have often taken a theoretical focus (e.g. Daniels et al, 2001; Feldman and Gainey, 1997). Empirical studies have been restricted to single organisations (Dimitrova, 2003; Valsecchi, 2006), considered specific job roles (i.e. Bailyn, 1989; Harrington and Ruppel, 1999; Valsecchi, 2006) or used very broad classifications of ‘professional’, ‘clerical’ or ‘knowledge’ workers (e.g. Golden and Veiga, 2005; Huws, 1991; Martinez-Sanchez, 2007). Furthermore, authors have noted that the influence of occupational norms on employees’



participation in telework has not been investigated (Kossek et al, 2006). This study sought to gain a better understanding of how job-specific factors within diverse contexts influence the diffusion and practice of telework. Analysis of the interview data revealed three broad classifications of jobs with respect to employees' skill levels and required interactions. These were standardised roles, independent roles, and collaborative teams. These job categories were subdivided by client interactions and the nature of information exchange required between colleagues. While all of the job roles identified were 'teleworkable' to some extent (as specified by Kippenberger, 2000: 27), the desirability of teleworking within these roles was reliant on both the organisations' strategic approach to telework and the employees' task and work-group characteristics which contributed to occupational norms of telework.

From the perspective of supply, employees' skill levels determine the desirability for organisations of providing telework to employees. Supplying voluntary telework on either a formal or informal basis to employees performing standardised roles is unattractive to organisations for two reasons. First, where employees have low labour market strength the organisation derives limited benefit from negotiating idiosyncratic teleworking arrangements as a retention strategy, since exiting employees are easy to replace. Second, the low task discretion and work-scheduling latitude (Golden and Veiga, 2005) which characterise standardised roles negate recognisable performance benefits from increased temporal or spatial flexibility. Consequently, retaining employees in a company location is considered practical, beneficial and cost effective (Paulet, 2008).

The exception is where telework is imposed within standardised roles to save space. When organisations wish to pursue a strategy of cost minimisation, imposing involuntary telework for sufficient numbers of standardised roles where performance can be easily monitored and exiting labour cheaply replaced, ensures adequate payback on investments (Tracey and Hilkin, 2008). However, contrary to previous predictions (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004), strong norms related to the desire to receive support for emotional labour, development and progression among employees performing standardised roles led these employees to actively resist the imposition of telework in the study. In combination, these factors explain the limited performance of telework within standardised roles (Ruiz and Walling, 2005),

despite these roles sometimes being deemed suited to telework in the literature (Fritz et al, 1996; Hamblin, 1995; Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996).

By contrast, the recognisable benefits to organisations from retaining skilled workers, and especially those with specialist or scarce skills, led skill retention to be the strongest driver for formal telework in the study. Skill type overrode other identified job characteristics when retention was the organisation's primary objective. These findings support Clear and Dickson's (2005: 227) conclusion that 'key workers' are permitted to telework within diverse contexts and suggest that skill requirements take precedence over task-based suitability when telework is provided to support retention. However, from the perspective of demand, employees were often deterred from leveraging their skills to secure formal telework by the threat of stigmatisation. Collaborative team members perceived stigmatisation as a greater deterrent to formal telework than employees performing independent roles. An explanation is that team members fear that colleagues will interpret their formal teleworking status as a lack of team commitment and consider their formal teleworking entitlements as inequitable. By contrast, a formal teleworking status is often invisible for those performing independent roles, especially where regular office attendance is kept.

Enhancing performance was the strongest driver for informal telework in the study. The capacity for telework to enhance performance was felt to be determined by employees' required interactions with colleagues and clients. 'Focused' or 'client-led' tasks with low requirements for internal interaction were deemed the most suitable for telework at all three organisations. Telework was therefore considered to enhance performance to the greatest extent within externally-facing independent roles and is often considered necessary and even expected within these roles. By contrast, those required to engage in internal collaboration within the organisation anticipated drawbacks to performance from extensive telework. The extent to which telework was felt to detract from performance was related to the nature of information exchange and the recognised difficulty of transferring implicit, 'soft-data' (Daft and Lengel, 1984, Lee et al, 2007). Furthermore, those who worked in non-technical teams were assumed to enjoy engaging in 'collective creativity,' which was considered a pre-requisite for a strong performer in their profession. The findings demonstrate that the act of engaging in telework is considered counter-cultural within some

professions and is therefore stigmatising. The social pressure to physically display an appropriate personality type may perpetuate norms of office working within professions which rely on soft-data exchange, even where technology can overcome the difficulties of soft data transmission.

Where 'hard data' were exchanged between colleagues, telework was considered to enhance performance to a greater extent than for those who worked with soft data. The nature of data exchange also appeared to have a greater influence on the acceptability of telework than team membership, especially where teams worked within the field of technology. In contrast to teams which exchanged soft-data, those working with hard data were assumed to have a self-selected suitability to telework (Workman et al, 2003). Technology professionals have been described as existing in a unique 'occupational community' distinguished from other roles by its 'newness,' 'innovation' and 'specialist tasks' which enable members to 'write their own scripts about what constitutes an effective workplace' (Kwantes and Boglarsky, 2004: 348). The unique but consistent norms among these professionals create a 'global community culture' (Vitiello, 2001 – in Kwantes and Boglarsky, 2004:348) where values such as respect for the innovative use of technology are resistant to counter influences within the wider organisation (Hall, 1987; Kwantes and Boglarsky, 2004). The strength of these occupational norms explains why telework was considered acceptable to varying extents for employees within technical teams at all three participating organisations.

The findings consequently challenge perceptions that telework is undesirable within teams (Kurland and Cooper, 2002) and indicate that the type rather than the existence of a team determines the perceived acceptability of providing and conducting telework. They also suggest that team membership influences employees' desire to telework on a formal or informal basis but demonstrate that a formal teleworking status may have little bearing on the extent of telework actually practised. Stated differently, while those in independent roles did not anticipate stigmatisation from teleworking formally, those required to interact internally within the organisation restricted the amount of telework practised to maintain adequate performance. Conversely, while employees in technical teams avoided a formal teleworking status in order to symbolically communicate their continued commitment to the team, they appeared comfortable practising extensive telework. The study demonstrates

that employees who participate extensively in telework often willingly abstain from formal telework to avoid the provision of stigmatising entitlements, especially where they are team members.

### **9.2.2 Organisational policies and practices**

The second identified factor which influences the diffusion and practice of telework is the nature of policies and practices within the organisation. There is continued debate in the literature regarding the appropriateness of organisational policies and practices to telework. Authors often highlight the need for ‘high commitment’ practices, such as outcome-based reward, self-development and independent socialisation, and suggest that organisations should adopt these practices in order to support telework (Mahler, 2012; Martinez-Sanchez, 2007; Van Dyne et al, 2007). In the study, the practices which supported extensive telework already had wider suitability within the organisation and, in particular, supported the dominant job roles. The findings support Harrington and Santiago’s (2006) conclusion that telework does not constitute a change but a natural progression for organisations.

High-Tech provided an example of an organisational environment to which high-commitment practices were not only conducive to productivity, but necessary. The specialist nature of roles at High-Tech and the wide geographical spread of the teams and client base meant that recruiting suitable personality types for telework and socialising staff remotely was essential. Managers relied on an ‘attraction-selection-attrition’ process (Schneider, 1987) to maintain competent personnel, as developing team members ‘in house’ was impractical. Self-selected suitability to the environment appeared to be the only method of guaranteeing successful remote communication and thereby maintaining satisfactory client service. Target-based reward was needed to track independent performance, make expert employees accountable for their own successes and support the de-selection of unsuitable employees. This approach reflects a culture of ‘self-reliance and individualism’ which Gainey et al (1999: 3) describe as most amenable to telework.

By contrast, the policies and practices at Local-Gov reflected the organisation’s dedication to maintaining availability and accountability to clients. The comparative advantage of office work over telework stemmed from the need to cater to the expectations of the local

community, regardless of employees' roles. The internalisation of organisational values and the maintenance of a public-service ethos were achieved through office-based socialisation and development and were considered necessary to support the public image of the organisation. Despite many job roles being 'teleworkable' (as specified by Kippenberger, 2000: 27) presence carried an inherent value, separate from its utility to serve as a proxy for productivity. Imposing target-based reward in this environment is problematic as teleworkers who increase productivity through reduced distractions may attract higher rewards than their non-teleworking counterparts. As non-teleworkers perceive their office presence to be of greater value to the organisation than teleworkers' enhanced output, inequity perceptions are likely to be exacerbated.

However, continuing to reward teleworkers and non-teleworkers on salary scales still presents problems as non-teleworkers perceive that they are comparatively under-rewarded for more valuable work. While arguments that formal structures and processes can protect teleworkers financial outcomes in bureaucratic organisations were supported (Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Harrington and Santiago, 2006), hidden 'social costs' at the hands of disgruntled non-teleworkers were also evident, discussed further below. Employees' acknowledgement of hidden costs helps to explain the relatively limited practice of telework within the public sector (LFS, 2007) in spite of public sector organisations being more likely to offer telework (Felstead et al, 2002).

The supply of and demand for telework was shown to be inhibited by contradictory policies and practices. Contradictory human resource management practices at Tel-Com encouraged managers to provide telework while simultaneously exposing them to challenges from doing so, which led managers to exercise caution over the supply of teleworking arrangements. Divergent perceptions among managers regarding what constituted acceptable telework led some to permit extensive flexibility, while others prohibited telework, or required teleworkers to adhere to organisational norms with respect to the timings of work. The result was resentment among non-teleworkers who disliked unpredictable out-of-hours contact from teleworkers (Lobel and Kossek, 1996) and uncertainty among employees over who was eligible to telework. Inconsistent policies and practices at Tel-Com can be attributed to frequent changes in ownership and strategy. A threat of change in governance or strategy may exacerbate managers' uncertainty about

irreversibly committing to a strategy which has dubious organisational commitment. As Sisson and Storey (2000: 19) acknowledge:

*‘Organisations are littered with half-finished initiatives which had to be interrupted because of take-over or merger or change of business decision or divestment leading to considerable cynicism, not only on the part of employees but the senior managers who are supposed to be implementing them’*

The findings highlight the need to consider factors within the organisational environment when investigating the diffusion and practice of telework and, in particular, the stability of the organisation’s ownership and strategic approach to telework.

Second, lower-level managers and employees associated outsourcing and policies aimed at cost-reduction with job insecurity. Perceived job insecurity reduced demand for telework at both Tel-Com and Local-Gov, as employees used presenteeism to display commitment and enhance their physical association with the organisation (Bailyn, 1989; Bolino, 1999; Raghuram et al, 1998; Simpson, 1998; Stevens et al, 2004). Consequently, while authors often suggest that cost reduction is a benefit of telework for employers, the findings suggest that performance enhancement, retention and cost reduction are incompatible benefits of voluntary telework. While cost benefits may be achievable though imposing telework, offering voluntary telework to enhance performance and retention requires increased investment, at least initially (Watad and DiSanzo, 2000). If organisations seek to reduce cost through reducing office space in parallel with voluntary telework, employees are likely to return to the office to enhance their perceived job security through enacting presenteeism. Many organisations perceive cost reduction to be the primary benefit of telework (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Those organisations which are unable or unwilling to impose telework onto employees, discussed below, are unlikely to recoup initial investments and may be motivated to avoid or discontinue teleworking arrangements.

### **9.2.3 Trade unions**

Third, the findings demonstrate that trade unions can influence the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations in at least four ways. First, union opposition to involuntary telework can prevent organisations from imposing telework on employees. Second, trade unions can influence the way in which voluntary telework is provided by specifying teleworkers' entitlements. Third, trade unions support employees who require telework for reasons of personal need. Fourth, trade unions can provide support to teleworkers to help prevent the unilateral withdrawal of their teleworking arrangement.

At Local-Gov, trade union intervention prohibited the use of involuntary telework, preventing the practice from being used as a viable space-saving strategy. As telework was perceived to have limited strategic value for other purposes, the practice remained exceptional and undesirable within the organisation. At Local-Gov and to a lesser extent at Tel-Com, managers were motivated to avoid union scrutiny and challenges to the withdrawal of undesirable teleworking arrangements by avoiding the provision of formal telework unless subordinates had a recognised need for it. The findings suggest that a union presence can encourage the provision of formal telework as an exceptional practice for employees with '*specific needs*'. Where informal telework was unavailable, as was often the case at Local-Gov, managers were deterred from providing telework altogether. The findings consequently support warnings that the existence of a formal teleworking policy is not reflective of the amount of telework actually performed in practice (Felstead et al, 2002). Furthermore, where a strong union is present and/or the provision of teleworking equipment is tied to a formal teleworking status, the presence of a formal teleworking policy may actually reduce the amount of telework managers are willing to supply.

### **9.2.4 Industry and organisational norms**

Finally, the findings provide empirical support for Daniels et al (2001) contention that industry norms influence the adoption of telework. They also build on Daniels et al (2001) by demonstrating how industry norms influence the way in which telework is practised within organisations. For example, while a public sector 'ethos' of accountability encouraged a norm of office working at Local-Gov, it also promoted fairness and inclusion

within the workforce. The consequence was that providing teleworking to support '*special circumstances*' was considered acceptable (Bach and Winchester, 2003; Gibson and Luck, 2004; Lethbridge, 2009). At High-Tech and Tel-Com, industry norms of acceptable telework were supported by their production of '*cutting edge*' technical products and the associated prevalence of and proficiency with technology throughout the workforce (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Watad and Will, 2003). The influence of industry norms for encouraging teleworking was most evident at Tel-Com where organisational support for telework was ambiguous, discussed below. Some participants were willing to engage in telework despite questionable organisational support due to their belief that telework was inherently suited to their industry. The study provides empirical support for the prediction that industry norms can influence the adoption and practice of telework among employees over and above organisational factors (Daniels et al, 2001).

Previous studies have disagreed on whether introducing telework will weaken (e.g. Clancy, 1994; Hill et al, 2003; Shamir and Salomon, 1985) or strengthen an organisation's culture (Dutton, 1994). High-Tech and Local-Gov provide examples of strong organisational cultures, in which consistent norms which directed employees' behaviour were apparent (Gainey et al, 1999). Strong organisational norms appeared to support teleworking in a manner which was consistent with those norms. Consequently, instead of constituting a 'threat' to organisational culture, telework appears to manifest in accordance with existing organisational norms. Where telework was promoted or practised in a way which was contrary to prevailing norms it was considered unacceptable, and attracted resistance (Sathe, 1983) from unions, senior managers, managers and employees. The findings suggest that instead of considering whether organisations will support telework, which has been the focus of previous studies (Gainey et al, 1999; Harrington and Ruppel, 1999; Harrington and Santiago, 2006), it may be more fruitful to consider more closely the type of telework that organisations will support. The organisation's industry, history and ownership, the dominance of particular job roles, and external influences such as trade unions, emerge as important contributors to how acceptable different types of telework will be within an organisation.



### **9.3 Q2. How do senior managers and lower-level managers affect the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements?**

#### **9.3.1 Senior managers**

Previous research has demonstrated that senior managers' strategic decisions are usually responsible for the presence of telework within organisations (Fogarty et al, 2011; Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010; Wood et al, 2003). However, studies have not expressly considered senior managers' own approach to telework, nor how their behaviours with respect to telework influence its diffusion and practice among the workforce more generally. To investigate these factors, participants were asked to provide their opinions on why they felt senior managers permitted telework within their organisation and how they felt senior managers themselves approached telework. These responses were compared with participants' explanations of why they participated in their chosen working method. Interview data were also collected from at least one senior manager at each organisation to shed light on the reasons for their approach and to assess whether their perceptions of telework corresponded with those of lower-level managers and employees. The aim was to produce a picture of how and why senior managers' reasons for adopting telework, alongside their own behaviour, influenced the approach taken to telework throughout the organisation.

#### **9.3.2 Senior managers' support for telework**

The findings demonstrate that senior managers' approach to telework was influenced by three previously recognised factors. First, there was evidence of coercive pressure at Local-Gov from central government and the recognised union (Daniels et al, 2001). Union pressure was also evident to a lesser extent at Tel-Com. Second, mimetic pressure was observed at both Tel-Com and High-Tech where providing telework was felt to be '*expected*' within the industry (Daniels et al, 2001; Felstead et al, 2002; Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010). However, while these factors influenced the availability of telework, uptake was related most strongly to senior managers' perceptions of whether telework had a clear comparative advantage over office working (Harrington and Ruppel, 1999;

Harrington and Santiago, 2006; Illegems and Verbeke, 2004; Peters and Heusinkveld, 2010).

Contrary to previous predictions, the findings demonstrate that senior managers' support for telework cannot be anticipated from the industry context (Daniels et al, 2001). For example, reflection on previous research suggests that at Tel-Com, senior management support for telework should be strong due to their awareness of the innovative benefits of technology and their clear vested interest in promoting their own products through telework (Daniels et al, 2003; Felstead et al, 2003; Wu, 2003). While senior managers at Tel-Com acknowledged the 'fit' of telework within the industry, parallel concerns over the stability of the teleworking strategy, and acknowledgement of potential trade union interference, reduced the perceived advantage of telework in comparison with office work.

### **9.3.3 Senior managers' behaviour towards telework**

Where senior managers perceived telework as comparatively more advantageous than office working, they were willing to endorse telework and to personally participate in the practice. These behaviours directly influenced lower-level managers' and employees' perceived organisational support for telework. In particular, senior managers' own participation in telework encouraged its adoption and practice for three reasons.

First, senior managers served as role models to lower-level managers and employees who emulated their behaviours in the hope of achieving similar success (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997; Suls, 2007). Consequently, where senior managers personally participate in telework it is seen as acceptable by lower-level managers and employees who desire progression into senior management roles. Second, senior managers' extensive use of telework removes the benefits for lower-level managers of remaining office-based in order to display commitment through presenteeism (Simpson, 1998). Third, senior managers who telework frequently rely on extensive online communication and structured face-to-face meetings, which encourages lower-level managers to behave in a similar way to maintain satisfactory contact. Senior managers' participation in telework consequently has a 'knock-on effect', influencing ambitious lower-level managers' participation in telework by reducing the instrumental benefit of maintaining physical visibility and presence (Felstead et al, 2003)

and reducing the risks of experimenting with telework. By contrast, where senior managers remain office-based, use ad hoc meetings and spontaneously display physical availability, lower-level managers are compelled to remain office-based or risk exclusion from important decisions and sidelining by peers and ambitious subordinates.

#### **9.3.4 Lower-level managers**

Teleworkers' direct managers have been described as both the gatekeepers and the biggest barriers to telework (Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Perez, 2002). Where telework is permitted, research has demonstrated that lower-level managers (referred to as managers) can influence both teleworkers' and non-teleworkers' experiences of telework through their chosen methods of management (Felstead et al, 2003; Kossek and Lautsch, 2011; Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Valsecchi, 2006). However, little is known about the conditions which lead managers to approach telework in diverse ways, and how their behaviours influence the uptake of telework within the workforce more generally. This study builds on previous research which suggests that managers influence the popularity of telework (Clear and Dickson, 2005) by demonstrating the ways in which managers' behaviour influences the uptake and practice of telework among employees.

In order to investigate how managers influenced the diffusion and practice of telework, managers were asked to explain their working preferences and to comment on the benefits and drawbacks of telework from their perspective. Managers were also asked to describe their approach to telework and to provide reasons for their approach. Managers' responses were considered with respect to the organisational and occupational environments within which they worked, and compared with managers who worked in both similar and different conditions. Finally, managers' responses were considered alongside those of senior managers, peers and subordinates. The aim was to produce a picture of how managers' behaviour towards telework influences employees' participation in telework and to consider the reasons for their behaviour. The findings reveal that lower-level managers influence the diffusion and practice of telework in five primary ways:

### **9.3.5 Managers' participation in telework**

First, like senior managers discussed above, lower-level managers serve as role models to subordinates and encourage subordinates to telework through their own participation in the practice. However, in the study, where telework was atypical, managers' participation could sometimes have the opposite effect if managers leveraged the presence of office-based subordinates to alleviate the negative outcomes of their own reduced visibility and presence while teleworking (Felstead et al, 2003). Prohibiting telework for subordinates where office working is the norm enables managers to conduct telework while retaining a channel for information, a conduit through which to exercise their authority and a physical reminder of their status within the organisation. Unsurprisingly, this behaviour was identified where managers had a vested interest in protecting their visible position within the organisation's hierarchy (Daniels et al, 2001). Managers' use of subordinates as a proxy for their own presence provides an explanation for their prohibition of telework among subordinates, despite personally using telework, as has been identified elsewhere (Fogarty et al, 2011). In contrast to previous suggestions (Kossek et al, 1999), this finding implies that encouraging managers to telework may not enhance wider workforce participation in telework if it restricts the practice for subordinate employees who are used as a proxy for their manager's presence.

### **9.3.6 Prohibiting telework**

The second way in which managers influence the diffusion and practice of telework is through their control over subordinates' access to it. The level of control managers exercised over employees' access was determined by the strength of support for telework within the wider organisation or profession. Where telework received strong organisational support, lower-level managers served as a 'rubber stamp' to telework, rather than a gatekeeper (Kurland and Cooper, 2002). It appears that where managing flexible employees is expected as part of a manager's role, managers who inhibit the practice risk being deemed an inappropriate 'fit' for their organisation or occupation, and risk being overridden or even de-selected from the environment (Schneider, 1987).

Managers served as gatekeepers to telework most prominently where the practice was atypical. Paradoxically, where telework was atypical, managers perceived the greatest personal risks and the fewest personal benefits from permitting telework. In the absence of sufficient inducements to experiment with telework, naturally risk-adverse managers opted to maintain the status quo out of both self-interest and self-protection (Daniels et al, 2001; Watad and Will, 2003). The ease of prohibiting telework where organisational support for the practice was considered weak created a vicious circle of restricted telework provision and inadequate processes to support telework, which reinforced managers concerns and the norm of office presence. While studies are often quick to demonise managers for inhibiting the success of telework (Hill et al, 2003), some 'resistance' is better described as 'reluctance' (Watson, 1982) stemming from often legitimate concerns and constraints. In particular, the threat of stigmatisation from permitting telework in unsupportive environments, and the potential that formal telework would be irreversible, deters managers from telework.

### **9.3.7 Displays of unsupportive behaviour**

Reticent managers were sometimes compelled to manage teleworkers by policy, following union support, or because they had inherited teleworkers from a previous manager. In such circumstances, the third way in which managers influence the diffusion and practice of telework is through implicit or explicit displays of unsupportive behaviour. Where employees considered their manager to be unsupportive of telework, employees anticipated unfavourable outcomes from teleworking and doubted their ability to resist challenges to their arrangement. Managers' marginalisation of teleworkers and their capacity for elevating the social consequences of performing telework within workgroups provides an explanation for the 'vicious circle of mistrust' between managers and teleworkers identified in the literature (Merriman et al, 2007). As most managers have unfavourable attitudes towards telework (Huws, 1990) many may manage teleworkers out of a constrained choice. Teleworkers' acknowledgment of this fact could logically enhance their suspicion that managers seek to undermine their teleworking arrangement where possible.

### 9.3.8 Classification of telework

A fourth way in which managers influence the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements is through the type of telework they permit. Where managers in the study faced pressure to permit telework, or were unsure of their expected behaviour, they sometimes struggled to fulfil competing obligations to the organisation and subordinates while maintaining their preferred working environment. Some managers aimed to resolve these obligations through the manner in which they permitted telework. Two identified approaches deserve emphasis.

First, managers provided telework informally where possible to reduce teleworkers' sense of entitlement over the practice and establish office working as the preferred method of work. The findings correspond with Fogarty et al (2011) and demonstrate that managers prefer informal telework in order to maintain flexibility and perceived control. They also build on previous findings by demonstrating that, in some cases, managers provide formal telework to protect their own image as a '*good manager*'. Where telework is provided informally on an ad hoc basis for '*suitable tasks*', managers project a performance orientation towards telework. By contrast, planned formal telework without '*good reason*' is associated with enhancements to employees' personal flexibility. Consequently, managers who were sympathetic to subordinates' desire for flexibility but felt expected to prioritise performance, concealed subordinates' telework in an attempt at reconciling competing pressures. Past observations that telework is often '*hidden*' within organisations (Clear and Dickson, 2005) can be conceived as a reflection of the competing demands inherent in managers' roles, especially where the organisation's position on telework is unclear (Eisenberger et al, 2002).

Second, permitting formal telework on the grounds of personal necessity and/or skill retention is a good solution for sceptical managers faced with legitimate requests for telework where the practice is atypical. By selectively providing formal telework for '*good reasons*' managers can fulfil their remit as a '*good manager*' by considering employees' personal circumstances and the organisation's obligations, while simultaneously presenting teleworkers as an out-group. Non-teleworking subordinates who view teleworkers as an out-group are deterred from requesting telework unless they too have a '*special reason*' to

do so. This strategy prevents an ‘opening of the flood gates’ to telework among subordinates which, in turn, preserves the norm of office-based working. Managers who engaged in this behaviour could consequently be described as resisting telework through selective acceptance (Ashcraft, 2005).

### **9.3.9 Management of teleworkers**

The fifth way in which lower-level managers influence the diffusion and practice of telework is through their approach to managing teleworkers. Four primary approaches were identified. First, as discussed above, managers’ concealment of subordinates’ telework inevitably restricts the extent to which telework is practised. Second, managers sometimes mitigate performance concerns by redistributing tasks to more proximate subordinates where possible. Regardless of whether managers redistribute tasks intentionally, the result is inhibited performance and deskilling for teleworkers and unfavourable opinions of teleworkers among non-teleworkers, results which have been recognised in the literature (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Felstead et al, 2003; Kurland and Cooper, 2002) and are discussed further below. Redistributing tasks to more proximate subordinates is easiest for managers where substitutes for teleworkers are available, and is most attractive where objective control measures are unavailable. Managers who believe subordinates benefit from close supervision, which emerged as those performing standardised and non-technical roles, have the most incentive and opportunity to sideline atypical teleworkers. To avoid being sidelined, teleworkers are compelled to remain in constant contact with the office, enter the office frequently and, in some cases, refrain from teleworking.

Where telework is atypical, managers who are prepared to experiment with allowing subordinates to telework are regarded as ‘*champions*’ for the practice (Kurland and Cooper, 2002). As previously discussed, managers who were required to provide telework formally to employees by policy are most visible, especially where telework was atypical. Where no exceptional justification for telework is apparent, managers feel obliged to maintain the acceptability of the arrangement. In these circumstances a third identified management approach was to place considerable pressure on teleworkers to adhere to performance requirements and to ‘*cause no problems*’ for non-teleworkers. Reflecting previous studies

(e.g. Felstead et al, 2003), managers emphasised trust as a method of controlling teleworkers and made telework conditional on employees' continued displays of trust (Clear and Dickson, 2005). The findings build on previous studies by demonstrating that where managers '*make a case*' for telework by emphasising trust, the level of appeasement behaviour required can undermine the work-life balance benefits of the teleworking arrangement. Thus, the findings indicate that emphasising trust in environments where organisational support is weak is most likely to deter employees who wish to protect their work-life balance from teleworking.

Finally, some managers demonstrated supportive behaviour towards teleworkers. Managers in the study were most likely to support telework when adhering to organisational and occupational norms to do so. Where telework is perceived as inevitable or accepted as '*performance enhancing*,' demonstrating supportive behaviours towards teleworkers affords managers the greatest possible control over an inevitable process. Establishing a rapport, scheduling face-to-face interaction, recruiting for teleworkers and distributing rewards based on outcomes appear to be necessary complementary strategies. Furthermore, Managers who facilitate telework where the practice is expected are already fulfilling their obligation to manage performance (Watad and Will, 2003). Consequently '*good managers*' within these conditions are those seen as safeguarding high-performing employees' well-being through managing schedules and encouraging subordinates to take '*downtime*' where available.

In organisations and job roles where telework is considered '*performance enhancing*' the processes required to manage telework are often already in place. Managers' concerns over trust are reduced by their perceptions that subordinates have an inevitable 'fit' with telework through self-selected suitability. Previous studies have emphasised either the suitability of an employee's personality type or the content of their job when considering the desirability of employees for telework (Peters et al, 2004; Renn et al, 2005; Workman et al, 2003). The findings of this study suggest that the two are inextricably linked as employees' perceived suitability to their role or even organisation is synonymous with their perceived suitability with telework in many cases.



#### **9.4 Q3. How do non-teleworkers affect the diffusion and practice of teleworking arrangements?**

Non-teleworkers' responses have been absent in much of the teleworking literature (Fogarty et al, 2011; Golden, 2006b; 2007). Several studies have identified the potential for undesirable personal and professional consequences of telework among non-teleworkers (e.g. Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Cramton, 2001; Forgarty, 2011; Golden, 2006a; 2007; Grey and Sturdy, 2007; Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Kugelmass, 1995; Van Dyne et al, 2007). Others have noted non-teleworkers' resistance to telework (Felstead et al, 2003; Lautsch et al, 2009). However, previous research has not paid specific attention to how non-teleworkers directly influence the diffusion and practice of telework within different circumstances. To reduce this knowledge gap, non-teleworkers were asked about their perceptions of telework. They were also asked to reflect on their interactions with teleworkers. Non-teleworkers' responses were matched with those of colleagues and managers. Finally, consideration was given to the contextual and situational factors which framed non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework. Analysis revealed that non-teleworkers could sometimes help to facilitate telework. However, they often inhibited the diffusion and practice of telework.

Non-teleworkers in the study had either been barred from telework or had chosen to remain in the office. It is unsurprising, then, that many non-teleworkers had unfavourable opinions of telework and experienced negative consequences from colleagues' teleworking (Fogarty et al, 2011; Golden, 2007). Unlike voluntary teleworkers and their managers who permit the practice, non-teleworkers are unlikely to have self-selected suitability for working in a teleworking context (Peters et al, 2004). Two identified factors motivated non-teleworkers to actively resist telework. First, where non-teleworkers perceived colleagues' telework to have been provided unfairly, their resistance can be understood as an attempt to redress perceived inequity (Adams, 1965; Golden, 2007). In the study, perceptions of inequity were increased where non-teleworkers considered telework to be a privilege or where they felt unfairly rewarded for additional or more valuable work effort. Second, where non-teleworkers wished to protect a preferred norm of office working, their resistance can be understood as a form of punishing behaviour (Moerbeek and Need, 2004). Non-teleworkers punished teleworkers if they felt they have '*abandoned*' the group, or if they had a '*vested*

*interest*’ in protecting the status quo, discussed below. Where non-teleworkers’ experiences of telework were unfavourable they took steps to mitigate their own negative outcomes. Non-teleworkers influenced the diffusion and practice of telework in four primary ways:

#### **9.4.1 Projecting consequences**

The first way in which non-teleworkers inhibit the diffusion of telework is by creating the perception among colleagues that teleworking will attract negative consequences. In the study this was achieved by directly opposing telework through withholding help and *‘telling tales’* on teleworkers to already anxious managers. For non-teleworkers in unsupportive environments, the ease of resisting telework by exerting pressure on managers to revoke the arrangement (Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999) deterred employees from engaging in telework in the first place. Where non-teleworkers were prevented from overtly resisting teleworking arrangements by strong organisational support, positioning teleworkers as an undesirable ‘out-group’ could also deter colleagues from requesting telework or encourage them to conceal the practice.

#### **9.4.2 Rewarding preferred behaviour**

The second way in which non-teleworkers influence the diffusion and practice of telework is by selectively rewarding teleworkers’ preferred behaviour. Those permitted to telework in the study were often required to deflect challenges to safeguard their arrangement, discussed above. Teleworkers were able to deflect challenges in two ways. First, they could enact *‘good teleworker behaviour’* by initiating regular contact, remaining flexible and available, coming into the office and performing helping behaviours (Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Totterdell et al, 1998; Van Dyne et al, 2007). The best example of selective assistance was provided by support staff at Local-Gov and Tel-Com. The findings highlight the role of support staff in facilitating telework, especially where it is atypical. Colleagues’ teleworking had profound consequences for support staff by potentially undermining their professional identity and ultimately their job security. Support staff rely on the presence of non-peers to perform their roles effectively and are influenced by powerful shared norms of *‘helpfulness’* and *‘friendliness’* within their profession. The protection of their professional identity explains the negative perceptions of telework identified among support staff and

their desire to resist others' telework (Ashforth, 2001; Hogg and Terry, 2001; Thatcher and Zhu, 2006).

To secure essential help from support staff, teleworkers were required to demonstrate interest and appreciation towards them. An explanation is that showing appreciation reinforces the support staffs' valued self-image as '*useful*' and '*helpful*' and thus reduces the threat of telework to their professional identity (Thatcher and Zhu, 2006). Where teleworkers are elusive, it consequently challenges support staffs' self-image making them feel redundant. The desire for self-verification therefore provides an explanation for why non-teleworkers in supporting roles prioritised those from whom they received more visible appreciation to the neglect of '*difficult*' elusive teleworkers. Unsurprisingly, the requirement to maintain contact to deflect challenges creates a dilemma for those required to conceal telework, who inevitably suffer the consequences of social and professional isolation alongside the threat of having their arrangement revoked.

The second way teleworkers could deflect challenges was to telework formally. Where telework was atypical non-teleworkers were more supportive of formal telework. The findings provide additional support for the contention that the provision of formal telework signifies commitment to the arrangement from the organisation (Harris, 2003). Thus non-teleworkers are encouraged to support the practice to avoid the consequences of appearing obstructive. The findings also support Fogarty et al (2011) by demonstrating that non-teleworkers appreciate the clarity and regularity of formal compared with informal teleworking among colleagues. However, the findings provide a further insight by suggesting that non-teleworkers prefer colleagues to perform formal telework where telework is atypical as a formal status carries the burden of inevitable stigmatisation. Non-teleworkers' own inconvenience is offset by the benefit of peers or managers visibly removing themselves from the competition for promotion (Blau, 1964; Vroom, 1967). However, it is notable that selective support for formal telework was reserved for those teleworking for '*good reasons*'. By selectively supporting formal telework for '*good reasons*' and resisting other forms of telework, non-teleworkers can effectively help to reinforce telework as an exceptional practice and protect the norm of office working.

### 9.4.3 Sidelineing teleworkers

The third way in which non-teleworkers affect the diffusion and practice of telework is by sidelining teleworkers. The two most important factors which influence non-teleworkers' propensity to sideline teleworkers are the extent to which teleworkers are 'substitutable' and the instrumental benefits for non-teleworkers of maintaining their relationships with teleworkers. Like managers, discussed above, non-teleworkers' sidelined teleworkers sometimes unintentionally. However, regardless of non-teleworkers' intent, 'substitutable' teleworkers were required to maintain a high level of visibility to deflect negative professional outcomes from becoming 'out of sight, out of mind', a recognised consequence of teleworking (Kurland and Cooper, 2002). The requirement to maintain a virtual and often physical presence to avoid being substituted or '*forgotten*' led teleworkers to face a trade-off between protecting their professional outcomes or their non-work flexibility.

Golden (2006b) argued that relationship deterioration in teleworking environments results from teleworkers' neglect of co-worker relationships, which were described as holding less utility than relationships with managers. The evidence presented here demonstrates that non-teleworkers may be primarily responsible for workplace relationship deterioration. Where substitutes for teleworkers are available, teleworkers are less central to networks and their power and influence within the organisation is reduced (Burt, 1992; Brass, 1985). Consequently, while teleworkers benefit from contact with non-teleworkers to avoid social and professional isolation, maintaining contact and relationships with teleworkers holds limited utility for non-teleworkers. Non-teleworkers may therefore sideline teleworkers as their relationships with them have a low instrumental value (Ducharme and Martin, 2000). Where more proximate employees serve as inadequate substitutes for teleworkers and/or non-teleworkers' performance relies on them, non-teleworkers are forced to overcome problems of separation and maintain communication with teleworkers.

This finding confirms previous research which suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain workplace relationships more by the instrumental than affective components of those relationships (Becker, 1975; Bourdieu, 1983; Ducharme and Martin, 2000). It also provides an explanation for Golden and Raghuram's (2010) discovery that non-teleworkers

are prepared to engage in knowledge-sharing with teleworkers even where the affective benefits of their relationships were weak. Finally, it challenges previous suggestions that organisations which implement telework should provide cross-training to maintain workplace flexibility by providing ‘cover’ for ‘missing’ employees (Perlow, 2001). Providing cross-training may actually increase teleworkers’ substitutability and expose them to professional isolation.

Where telework is prevalent within an organisation or role, non-teleworkers find it harder to substitute teleworkers. Consequently teleworkers with specific skills or experience are guaranteed to receive contact from both managers and colleagues and their tasks will be unchanged. By contrast, teleworkers with general skills or who work within organisations where office working is the norm are more easily substitutable. Consequently, unless teleworkers with office-based substitutes are proactive in seeking out contact and developmental tasks they are likely to experience de-skilling from telework (Fulton, 1997). This may explain why ‘key workers’ with specialist skills are more willing to telework (Clear and Dickson, 2005). Rather than simply providing a justification for organisations to permit telework, the acknowledgement of protected rewards may also improve demand for telework among these employees.

#### **9.4.4 Encouraging teleworkers’ presence**

Even where no substitutes for teleworkers are apparent, non-teleworkers can still influence the practice of telework in a fourth way, by constructing scenarios which compel teleworkers to enter the office. Those teleworkers with sufficient support to resist colleagues’ demands can do so, but are exposed to stigmatisation as ‘*bad teleworkers*’. Teleworkers in the study were only relieved of the threat of stigmatisation when teleworking was the norm among colleagues. Where non-teleworkers are in the minority they face a greater threat of repercussions from inhibiting telework than teleworkers do from refusing to acquiesce to non-teleworkers’ demands.

The findings shed light on Golden’s (2007) study, which found that the more non-teleworkers’ colleagues teleworked, the more dissatisfied they became and the more likely they were to exit the organisation. Given that Golden’s study took place in a High

Technology organisation where telework was open to all, it is argued here that non-teleworkers' increased dissatisfaction is more likely to be attributable to a bad Person-Environment Fit than to perceptions of injustice, the explanation offered by the author. High turnover intentions among non-teleworkers in Golden's study may simply be evidence of the effectiveness of the 'attraction-selection-attrition', process used by managers at High-Tech in this study.

## **9.5 Q4. How do teleworkers' experiences and the gender and domestic circumstances of the teleworker affect the diffusion and practice of telework in organisations?**

### **9.5.1 Teleworkers' experiences of telework**

Given the rising number of organisations offering telework, a potential reason for the low uptake among employees is limited demand (Siha and Monroe, 2006). Employees can choose to abstain from voluntary telework where they anticipate unfavourable consequences (Kurland and Cooper, 2002). Alternatively, employees may be deterred from continuing to telework following unfavourable experiences. Previous studies have produced mixed results regarding the outcomes of telework for teleworking employees. The results of Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) meta-analysis, which assessed the outcomes of telework for teleworkers, suggest that employees' experiences of telework are largely positive. However, the potential for employees to de-select themselves from telework to avoid unfavourable experiences has also been acknowledged (Kurland and Cooper, 2002; Peters et al, 2004). The study aimed to investigate the relationship between employees' experiences of performing telework and their participation in the practice. It was felt that an enhanced understanding of this relationship would shed light on the limited practice of telework among employees. Reflection on the literature indicated that considering the combined influence of employees' individual characteristics and work demands on their perceptions and experiences of telework, within a variety of job roles and organisations, would provide new and informative insights into employees' experiences of telework. In consequence, this approach was taken in the study.

Participants were asked to explain their reasons for engaging in their current working method and to reflect at length on their experiences of telework. Those who participated in telework did so for three primary reasons. These were to enhance their performance, to accommodate their personal needs or to improve their lifestyle through achieving a more favourable work-life balance or from separating themselves from an unfavourable working environment. Teleworkers were motivated to continue to telework where they were able to achieve their primary aim, and many of the voluntary teleworkers sampled reported positive experiences. However, teleworking was still associated with unfavourable outcomes, including professional and social isolation, work-life conflict and workplace relationship depreciation. These outcomes affect employees' propensity to perform telework and the manner in which they practise it. It was evident that for many employees, participation in telework involves a constant re-evaluation of their preferences, needs and outcomes.

To some extent the findings provide additional support for prevailing arguments that high-skilled employees experience increased autonomy through performing telework while low-skilled employees experience reduced autonomy (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Shamir and Salomon, 1985; Valsecchi, 2006). However, they also demonstrate that the way in which increased autonomy is experienced by teleworkers is determined by the reason telework is performed.

#### *Performance-enhancing telework*

Where telework is supported by the organisation as a means of enhancing performance, increased autonomy is conditional on maintaining performance. Work-oriented teleworkers who display a good 'fit' with demanding roles and high performance cultures (Shin, 2004) consider high work demands inevitable. Despite displaying evidence of workaholism, to which teleworking is known to contribute (Olson and Primps, 1984), these teleworkers perceive that performing telework improves their work-life balance in comparison with office working (Dimitrova, 2003). Where teleworking is an expectation, as it was at High-Tech and in some independent roles at Tel-Com, family distractions could be a welcome reprieve from work demands and assist employees in taking 'downtime'. These findings shed light on Golden (2012) who found that family interference with work was not

associated with exhaustion for teleworkers in the technology industry. Where telework is associated with high performance those who are unwilling or unable to maintain performance expectations de-select themselves from telework, and sometimes from the role and organisation.

### *Telework as a retention strategy*

High-skilled teleworkers also experienced increased autonomy where formal telework was provided as a retention strategy (Clear and Dickson, 2005). However, it is notable that achieving guaranteed flexibility through telework was possible only where telework was provided to high skilled employees as an atypical practice. Ubiquitous telework in demanding roles reflected an inherently challenging work-load and a culture of high performance, described above. Consequently, using telework to safeguard guaranteed personal flexibility was often considered counter-cultural and to reflect underperformance, which exposed the teleworker to challenge. Second, by teleworking formally where telework was atypical, employees were able to demonstrate an implicit acceptance of impaired professional development through reduced visibility, in exchange for the opportunity to telework. This recognised trade-off gave teleworkers license to use their additional flexibility for personal benefit while managing expectations and avoiding challenges from colleagues. Their physical absence from the office relieved these teleworkers of adherence to occupational norms of temporal and spatial flexibility while their specialist skills and pro-active availability maintained contact and the acceptability of their arrangement.

By contrast, where telework was 'normal,' employees' visibility was unaffected by teleworking and therefore such a visible trade-off could not be made. The findings support Kossek et al (2006) by demonstrating that skilled, 'dual-centric' employees were sometimes willing to accept a degree of professional isolation to improve their work-life balance and remain involved in their job. However, they also build on Kossek et al by demonstrating that dual-centric employees sometimes purposefully seek out professional isolation in exchange for work-life balance improvements and use it as a form of expectation management. At the extreme, some teleworkers exited demanding roles where telework



was typical so that they could perform telework atypically in order to safeguard their flexibility.

### *Telework as a constrained choice*

As organisations do not benefit from providing voluntary telework to low-level workers, the practice was restricted to those with a recognised personal need. Those teleworking to fulfil a personal need felt compelled to remain flexible towards work. Excessive work-directed flexibility in these circumstances can be understood both as reciprocation for an exceptional arrangement and as an attempt to safeguard the teleworkers' arrangement and their employment which relies upon it (Grant et al, 2008; Haddon and Lewis, 1994). Despite maintaining excessive availability, social isolation and de-skilling were notable outcomes of need-based telework. These outcomes relate to teleworkers' substitutability in the office and the absence of self-selected suitability for telework (Peters et al, 2004). Consequently, while teleworkers who rely on telework are grateful for their arrangement, unfavourable experiences encourage them to seek alternative arrangements where possible, including re-entry to the office.

### *Low acceptability telework*

While the discussion so far provides support for the position that high-skilled employees receive more favourable teleworking arrangements than lower-skilled employees (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Haddon and Brynin, 2005; Martinez-Sanchez et al, 2007), the findings also reveal why this is not always observed (Dimitrova, 2003). Where organisational support for telework is lacking or where substitutes for teleworkers are present in the office, teleworkers performing high-skilled jobs still suffer stigmatisation and challenges to their autonomy which lead to unfavourable experiences of telework (Kossel et al, 2006). Skilled employees who consider telework to enhance their performance are sometimes prepared to '*champion*' the practice in unsupportive environments in anticipation of deferred reward. However, stigmatisation persists despite teleworkers performing appeasement behaviour. While conceptually separating themselves from '*bad teleworkers*' appears to enable some teleworkers to maintain a positive self-image in the face of challenge (Jackall, 1978), this positive self-image also appears difficult to sustain. Ambitious ex-teleworkers described

returning to the office to prevent a 'lose-lose' situation in which both their professional outcomes and their work-life balance were negatively affected by performing telework in comparison with peer-level colleagues.

Similarly, those who wished to increase their flexibility for personal benefits in unsupportive environments were often reliant on supportive managers who compelled them to conceal their telework to avoid challenge. The consequence of elusive behaviour is stigmatisation and resentment from colleagues (Cramton et al, 2007; Lawrence and Corwin, 2003; Van Dyne et al, 2007) and social and professional isolation. In these circumstances, teleworkers are compelled to reduce the amount of telework performed to deflect challenges and are sometimes de-selected from telework altogether.

Previous studies have suggested that positive self-presentation is important for teleworkers who wish to avoid professional isolation (e.g. Van Dyne et al, 2007). The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of organisational support for telework and the impact of substitutes for teleworkers in determining the viability and success of strategies of self-presentation. For teleworkers with low or substitutable skills the level of self-presentation required to deflect resistance can sometimes undermine the benefits of teleworking to the point that a return to the office is preferable. Furthermore, positive self-presentation is prohibited where limited organisational or managerial support compels teleworkers to hide the extent to which they telework, which reinforces the threat of stigmatisation and challenge.

#### *Availability of external support*

However, the findings also demonstrate that teleworkers can take steps to enhance their autonomy and experience telework more favourably, even where they perform telework in low-skilled roles, if they are willing and able to defend their flexibility. Teleworkers opt to defend their flexibility for three reasons. First, some teleworkers use telework as a means of disassociating themselves from unsatisfactory working relationships and to reduce the psychological salience of an undesirable work environment (Ashforth, 2001; Jackall, 1978; Millward et al, 2007). Second, some employees experience telework as an improvement and wish to maximise their flexibility by avoiding the demands placed on them to perform

*'good teleworker behaviour'*. Third, if teleworkers feel they have suffered stigmatisation and experienced professional isolation from practising formal telework, they sometimes consider this a price paid for their flexibility. Paying a price for flexibility enhances teleworkers' sense of entitlement over both their teleworking arrangement and their enhanced autonomy (Fogarty et al, 2011).

In the absence of incentives to conform to *'good teleworker behaviour'* such as financial reliance or career ambition, those wishing and able to defend flexibility are motivated to do so, especially where they lack trust that management will support their arrangement (Merriman et al, 2007). Teleworkers can *'fight'* to retain their teleworking arrangement in the face of challenges by calling on external sources of support and *'push back'* against others' demands on their flexibility. Notable conditions in this study were membership of a trade union and the financial support of a partner. Where attempts to defend an arrangement were unsuccessful, teleworkers were unilaterally de-selected from telework. Where teleworkers' resistance was successful, teleworkers experienced telework favourably. However, managers were incentivised to avoid the provision of formal telework to employees whom it was feared would resist the revocation of teleworking arrangements.

### **9.5.2 Teleworkers' gender and domestic circumstances**

Mixed results have been shown in previous studies which focus on the influence of employees' gender and domestic circumstances on their participation in and experiences of telework. In particular, little is known about the interaction between employees' gender and domestic circumstances, their membership of different job roles and organisations, and their participation in telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Haddad et al, 2009; Hardill and Green, 2005). The study aimed to reduce this knowledge gap by investigating how men and women experience telework within different circumstances, to shed light on the differential uptake and practice of telework between genders (Beasley et al, 2001; IRS, 2006; Kyzlinková and Svobodová, 2007). Participants' experiences of telework, discussed above, were analysed with respect to their gender and domestic circumstances. Analysis revealed that employees' experiences of telework are influenced by their gender and domestic circumstances in three primary ways.

### *Adherence to 'good telework behaviour'*

First, teleworkers' gender and domestic circumstances influence the extent to which they can adhere to norms of high performance, perform expected '*good teleworker behaviours*' where telework is atypical and overcome stereotypes when teleworking. In the study, men and women's continued adherence to traditional gender roles (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001) meant that men were more able than women to display flexibility towards work and project a professional image when teleworking. Men were also more able to pro-actively manage work and non-work tasks, regardless of their domestic circumstances, while women suffered interference from friends and family which could be damaging to their professional image.

Authors have previously concluded that teleworking men restrict their participation in home tasks to protect their masculine identity (Duxbury and Higgins, 1991; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). The findings support this contention but also suggest that men can telework more extensively in demanding roles while successfully managing family interference. Men not only have the licence to discipline family members who threaten their professional image but perceive it as their duty to do so '*for the good of the family*'. Men's authority within the home affords them greater opportunity to demonstrate flexibility and maintain a professional image while teleworking. By contrast, women who focus on work and '*ignore*' family members are seen as acting against the family's best interests. In the study, attempts at sabotage by family members who felt neglected contributed to non-teleworkers' perceptions that women were unprofessional when teleworking. Ambitious women must seemingly choose between integrating work and home, which results in colleagues hearing family interference, or avoiding telework altogether in demanding roles. The findings suggest a paradox for ambitious women where telework is the norm. The desire to avoid stigmatisation prevents women from performing telework, which in turn is considered necessary for high performance.

The findings also counter the position that employees' work experiences are gender blind when they do not have dependent caregiving responsibilities (Baruch, 2002; Dimitrova, 2003). Both men's and women's responses implied that female teleworkers' productivity was presumed to be inevitably impaired by domestic demands. These findings are

consistent with Hoobler et al (2009) and demonstrate that women are stereotyped to act as caregivers, regardless of their actual caregiving requirements. The assumption that women prioritise non-work demands devalues their contributions in the eyes of managers and colleagues, even where support for telework is strong. Simply being female creates the necessity to overcome stereotypes which discourages ambitious women from telework (Daniels et al, 2001). In combination these factors help to explain why low numbers of women compared with men telework in professional jobs (Bailey and Kurland, 2002).

### *Participation in atypical telework*

Second, teleworkers' gender and domestic circumstances influence both their demand for and access to atypical telework. The decision to exit demanding roles where telework was the norm to perform atypical telework on a formal basis was only evident among women. This evidence is consistent with the phenomenon of the 'selective exiting' of women in roles requiring excessive physical and temporal flexibility (Duxbury and Higgins, 1991: 68). The implication is that while teleworking men in skilled roles manage their work and non-work demands through available '*downtime*' on typical or informal teleworking arrangements, women perceive this level of flexibility insufficient to manage their non-work demands. These findings provide an explanation why, despite women and men both using telework to increase time with children, this motivation is stronger for women and why men and women telework at different points in their careers (Kyzlinková and Svobodová, 2007). Ambitious women participate in formal telework mid-career to care for children, and return to the office later to deflect caregiver stereotypes (Kyzlinková and Svobodová, 2007). Ambitious men avoid a stigmatising formal teleworking status where possible and increase time with children through '*performance enhancing*' or informal telework. Where skilled men opt to negotiate formal telework they do so when they have reached a satisfactory career stage and use telework to improve their quality of life (Beasley et al, 2001; Kyzlinková and Svobodová, 2007).

Women also have greater access to telework in lower-level roles than men. In the study, low-skilled employees were generally only granted voluntary telework for reasons of personal need as telework was not felt to enhance performance or provide significant advantages through skill retention within these roles. While childcare was often considered

a 'need' for women, it was not for men. The implication is that women's adherence to traditional gender roles not only increases their demand for telework (Silver, 1993; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001), but is seen as a pre-requisite for access to telework at lower levels.

### *Willingness and ability to defend flexibility*

Third, teleworkers' gender and domestic circumstances influence their willingness and ability to defend their flexibility while teleworking. The findings demonstrate that women are more willing and able to resist both demands on their flexibility and the withdrawal of telework for three reasons. First, as discussed above, women were more able than men to acquire formal telework for personal need, which was more difficult to withdraw, especially where they were a member of a trade union. Second, women were more likely to have the financial support of a partner and therefore feel less compelled to acquiesce to managers' demands to safeguard their employment. Third, teleworking women experienced greater stigmatisation from teleworking and therefore had more incentive to telework extensively to maximise their non-work flexibility in return for the price of stigmatisation (Fogarty et al, 2011). The findings provide an explanation for why teleworking women in lower-level roles have been shown to have more favourable experiences of work than their office-based counterparts (Silver, 1993). Women may reduce their helping behaviours towards colleagues where they perceive a price has been paid for their flexibility, improving their own lifestyle by comparison to colleagues and even creating additional work for non-teleworkers (Lautsch & Kossek, 2011).

The findings provide clarity over men and women's differential practice and experiences of telework. Men's expectation to prioritise work (Duxbury and Higgins, 1991; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001) and restricted access to telework for caregiving purposes explains their perceptions that work spills into family while teleworking. Teleworking women's greater requirement to integrate work and non-work tasks in both demanding roles and in lower-level roles to protect their arrangement, explains their perceptions that family spills into work (Shockley and Allen, 2007). While it is possible for men and women to privilege either work or family, rather than trying to do both and 'have it all' to enhance their well-being, as authors suggest (Marsh and Musson,

2008), men are compelled to prioritise work, and women family. 'Having it all' simply requires the greater inclusion of the secondary priority.

Thus, while the findings provide support that men and women do perform telework for different reasons (Beasley et al 2001), they demonstrate that the primary reason is often pre-ordained and those who attempt to prioritise a second role while teleworking, do so at the risk of their well-being (Kossek et al, 2006; Marsh and Musson, 2008). The consequence is that the 'breadwinner' stereotype for men, which bars men from teleworking in lower-level roles, and 'caregiver' stereotype for women, which deters women from teleworking at all levels of the organisation are reinforced. The findings help to explain why fewer women telework than men (IRS, 2006). Furthermore, they explain why high-skilled professional men predominate where telework is typical, as it may be expected for performance, while women predominate where telework is atypical as it is negotiated to guarantee flexibility or performed as a constrained or retained choice (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; ONS, 2002).

## **9.6 Summary of the key findings**

The chapter has discussed the empirical data presented in Chapters 5-8 with respect to the specific research questions presented in Chapter 3. The aim has been to investigate the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations in order to gain a better understanding of the limited uptake of telework in the employed workforce reported in the literature.

Analysis revealed that the prevalence of particular job roles in organisations influences the organisation's strategic approach to telework. Where telework is recognised to enhance performance in the majority of job roles, voluntary telework is considered acceptable and beneficial for performance throughout the organisation. Where telework is not considered to enhance performance, but employees have high skills, voluntary telework is considered a viable retention strategy. Telework is only considered strategically beneficial in low-skilled roles when it is imposed to reduce costs.

The findings reveal a reciprocal relationship between the presence of dominant job roles, policies and practices, trade unions and organisational and industry norms of telework. Industry norms have an overarching influence on the perceived acceptability of telework, especially where organisational support is ambiguous. Overall, the findings suggest that telework manifests in a way which best fits with existing norms and practices within an occupation, organisation or industry. Consequently, telework is likely to remain most prevalent within technically-focused organisations and within independent and technical roles and be restricted in organisations where non-technical roles predominate.

Senior managers' visible support for telework is strongest where they recognise the comparative advantage of telework over office working. Visible commitment from senior managers compels lower-level managers' to support telework. By contrast, senior managers' reticence toward telework exposes lower-level managers who support telework to scrutiny and stigmatisation.

Lower-level managers approach telework in the manner which most reduces the risks associated with the environment. Where managers perceive providing telework as stigmatising or irreversible they attempt to deter subordinates from the practice or provide informal or atypical telework to restrict telework and retain control. Managers also influence employees' experiences of telework through their management of it by creating requirements for teleworkers to perform appeasement or concealment behaviours to deflect challenges, which can deter employees from telework. Lower-level managers are most supportive of telework where the practice is inevitable and where subordinates are perceived to have self-selected suitability to telework as a product of organisational or occupational membership.

Non-teleworkers' ability to substitute teleworkers, the instrumental value for non-teleworkers of maintaining their relationships with teleworkers, and non-teleworkers' fit with a teleworking context emerged as the three most important determinants of their behaviour towards teleworkers. Where telework is atypical non-teleworkers' working experiences are least affected by telework but they are often most inhibitive of the practice. Non-teleworkers use social pressure to prevent colleagues from participating in telework or undermine teleworking arrangements to protect their preferred working environment. Non-



teleworkers have elevated power to undermine telework within these conditions as teleworkers are often substitutable and resisting telework carries a limited threat of consequence. By contrast, non-teleworkers who choose to refrain from telework where the practice is typical have more negative experiences of telework if they are required to interact with teleworking colleagues. However, despite non-teleworkers' unfavourable experiences their inability to resist telework where it is typical encourages their acceptance of telework or their de-selection from the environment.

Employees abstain from telework to avoid unfavourable trade-offs which can result from requirements to manage challenges from managers and non-teleworkers and to avoid professional isolation. Only where telework is considered necessary to enhance performance can it be practised formally and extensively without employees experiencing professional drawbacks. However, teleworkers within these conditions must be prepared to prioritise work. Using telework to enhance work-life balance is reliant on employees having sufficient leverage to negotiate atypical telework, their ability to *'push back'* against challenges from managers and colleagues, and their acceptance of inhibited development.

Men are restricted to performing high-status telework and are compelled to act as *'good teleworkers'* or face professional isolation and/or unilateral de-selection from telework. By contrast, stereotypes that women are caregivers deter women from conducting telework in high-skilled roles. The same care-giver stereotype grants women access to atypical telework in low-skilled roles where it is unavailable to men. Women must perform integration strategies to maintain their arrangement, or use professionally and socially isolating behaviour to defend their flexibility.

Consequently, while teleworking men are compelled to demonstrate *'good teleworker'* behaviour, teleworking women display *'bad teleworker' behaviour*. *'Bad teleworker behaviour'* is witnessed throughout the organisation and perpetuates the stereotype of women as caregivers which deters women from telework. Furthermore the perceptions that formal teleworkers are *'bad teleworkers'* discourages managers from providing formal telework without *'good reason'*. The consequence is that formal telework is only provided in high-skilled roles for the purposes of retention or low-level roles to accommodate and employee's personal need. Thus, the perception is reinforced that formal teleworkers are an

exceptional 'awkward minority' rather than the norm (Felstead et al, 2003: 261). The result is reduced demand from employees wishing to avoid stigmatisation, and restricted supply from managers who limit telework to avoid risks. The exception is where senior management support telework as a strategy to enhance performance.

The following chapter summarises the thesis, outlines the main contributions of the research with respect to the literature on telework and considers the implications of the study. The limitations of the study are also considered and suggestions for future research are proposed.

## **CHAPTER 10: Summary and Conclusion**

### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis by presenting a brief summary of its chapters. The main contributions of the research are then outlined, and the key implications of the study are discussed. The limitations of the study are also considered and suggestions for future research proposed.

### **10.2 Overview of the thesis**

Chapter 1 provided a background to the research and discussed the reasons for conducting the study. It outlined the overarching aim of the study, which was to consider the factors which influence the diffusion and practice of telework in the employed workforce and provided an outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2 described how telework has developed as a working practice and considered how telework is practised in the workforce. The review revealed that telework remains limited among employees despite widely reported benefits to employees and employers. Potential explanations that emerged were either restrictions to the supply or demand of telework, or the possibility that data misrepresent the number of teleworkers as a result of recognised definitional issues surrounding the term ‘teleworker’.

Chapter 3 presented a targeted literature review in order to shed light on the limited practice of telework within the workforce and gain insights into why employers or employees might refrain from telework. Limited research on the supply of telework and a general neglect of the contextual and situational conditions within which telework is practised were identified as factors which contributed to unclear and contradictory findings. The need for additional data at the individual, group and organisation level, and an increased understanding of the contextual and situational factors surrounding telework were acknowledged. It was felt that a multi-level analysis was required to provide an enhanced understanding of the consequences of telework and, related to this, its uptake.

With respect to supply, there was no consensus in the literature regarding which types of organisation or job roles were most amenable to telework and there was little consideration of the industry context. Consequently, the first research question targeted an investigation of these factors. The literature review revealed that enhanced productivity and retention were accepted by managers as benefits of telework, but that employee trust and the management of non-teleworkers were concerns for managers. As past research has often focused on teleworkers to the neglect of managers and non-teleworkers, the influence of these employees on the diffusion and practice of telework provided the focus for the second and third research questions. Finally, the literature review revealed that employees' experiences of telework may be influenced by their gender and domestic circumstances, though the relationship between these factors was unclear. Thus, consideration of employees' experiences with respect to gender and domestic circumstances was hoped to provide important insights into the diffusion and practice of telework.

Chapter 4 outlined the methodological approach to the study and provided a rationale for adopting the evolved grounded theory method. In particular, the desire to understand the 'social world' of participants and to uncover the relationship between the conditions under which telework is employed, as well as the consequences experienced by employees within these conditions, led this approach. The benefits of using an evolved grounded theory approach, rather than a traditional grounded theory approach, were outlined. Further, the chapter provided details of the research context, the sample, procedure and analysis, and highlighted ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presented the empirical findings with respect to industry, organisational and job-specific factors. The perceived fit of telework with the organisation's internal and external environment, including industry norms, the organisation's core activities alongside the nature and coherence of organisational policies and practices influenced the perceived level of organisational support for telework among participants. Where telework was recognised to provide tangible performance benefits and was supported as such, it was felt to attract greater support than where no performance benefits were evident. Where the organisation's reasons for offering telework were unclear, and/or organisational policies communicated the desirability of office presence, support for telework was perceived by participants to be weaker. The organisation's history and ownership and the presence of trade unions had an

important influence on the organisation's strategic approach to telework. In particular, trade unions could prohibit the imposition of telework, specify entitlements for teleworkers, support employees who required telework, and assist in resisting the unilateral withdrawal of teleworking arrangements.

The chapter presented a typology of job roles, derived from employees' skill levels, team and client interactions, and the nature of data exchange required. The level of perceived organisational support for telework within these job roles was related to these job characteristics alongside the organisation's strategic approach to telework. Voluntary telework was felt to provide the least organisational benefit in standardised roles and most benefit in independent roles. Where independent roles were externally facing, the benefits of telework were felt to be greater than when they were internally facing. Within teams, the benefits of telework were perceived to be greater where team members were required to exchange 'hard' rather than 'soft' data. Providing telework for practical purposes was considered generally acceptable. For retention purposes telework was considered acceptable within high-skilled roles, regardless of more specific task characteristics.

Chapter 6 presented the empirical findings relating to the responses of senior managers and low-level managers. Senior managers acted as role models, influencing lower-level managers' expected behaviour towards telework. Alongside managers' own personal working preferences, managers' approach to telework was determined by the suitability of subordinates' job roles, and managers' ability to manage teleworkers while protecting their own professional outcomes. In cases where organisational support for telework was strong, sympathetic managers demonstrated support for telework while unsympathetic managers tried to discourage and restrict the practice. In cases where organisational support for telework was weak, sympathetic managers either concealed subordinates' telework or championed telework for individual subordinates while still requiring them to limit disruption to others in order to avoid challenge. Unsympathetic managers simply prohibited or withdrew the practice.

Chapter 7 presented the empirical findings with respect to non-teleworkers' responses. Non-teleworkers' perceptions of the suitability of telework to the context, the manner in which telework was provided, and non-teleworkers' actual or anticipated experiences of

telework all influenced non-teleworkers' perceptions of telework. The instrumental value for non-teleworkers of maintaining their relationships with teleworkers and the 'substitutability' of teleworkers within the office were highlighted as important conditions which influenced non-teleworkers' behaviour towards teleworkers. Where non-teleworkers had unfavourable perceptions of telework, they resisted the practice either overtly or covertly by applying social pressure and sidelining teleworkers. Where teleworkers were 'substitutable,' non-teleworkers sometimes unintentionally undermined telework. Finally, non-teleworkers supported telework where the instrumental benefits of maintaining their relationships with teleworkers compelled them to do so, or where they were rewarding preferred behaviour to manage telework in accordance with their own preferences.

Chapter 8 presented the empirical findings with respect to teleworkers' approach to and experiences of telework. It outlined the factors within teleworkers' non-work environment which influence their decision to telework, their behaviour when teleworking, and their experiences of telework. This chapter presented a typology of six 'types' of voluntary teleworker. The types were identified from a combination of teleworkers' motivation for teleworking; teleworkers perceived support for telework and teleworkers approach to defending their arrangement and preferred outcomes. These factors determined the continued acceptability of a teleworking arrangement from the perspective of managers, non-teleworkers and teleworkers. Those able to leverage organisational and external support for telework could '*push back*' to enhance their flexibility on a teleworking arrangement. Finally, the chapter demonstrated that women are more willing and able than men to '*push back*' to protect their flexibility.

Chapter 9 presented an integrated discussion which related the empirical data presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 to the specific research questions presented in Chapter 3.

### **10.3 Contributions of the study**

#### **10.3.1 The research approach**

Telework is recognised to be a heterogeneous practice which leads to diverse outcomes for teleworkers. However, while heterogeneity is accepted, little is known about why it occurs (Belanger and Collins, 1998; Ellison, 1999; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Kurland and Bailey, 2002). The primary contribution of the study to the teleworking literature lies in the approach taken to understanding how and why telework is adopted and practised differentially within the employed workforce. To the researcher's knowledge, this study provides the first multi-level analysis which investigates the diffusion and practice of telework within organisations.

Specifically, the research provides a unique insight into how industry, organisational and job-specific factors interact with employees' individual characteristics and situational factors to influence the diffusion and practice of telework. The inclusion of teleworkers' senior managers, lower-level managers and non-teleworkers as participants enabled substantial insights into the social dynamics and social costs of telework. The inclusion of ex-teleworkers, who are absent from existing research, also provided essential insights into the intolerable drawbacks of performing telework. Consequently, the study presents a realistic picture of the practice and outcomes of voluntary telework and overcomes the problem of the self-selected suitability of voluntary teleworkers when considering the outcomes of telework, evident in much of the previous research (e.g. Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

The use of an evolved grounded theory approach, along with the inclusion of multiple organisations and the large sample of diverse informants, makes the findings generalisable to other contexts (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Gill and Johnson, 2002). The findings presented are the product of extensive analysis through constant comparison, which enables identification and triangulation of causal links between situational factors and employees' experiences and their approach to telework (Gill and Johnson, 2002, Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Consequently, the typologies of identified job types, voluntary teleworkers and the identified behaviours of managers and non-teleworkers presented are contextually relevant

rather than context specific. They are therefore applicable within different organisational environments and within changing conditions. For example, if the content of a teleworkers' job or their reasons for teleworking change, teleworkers' experiences can be predicted to follow the shifting acceptability of telework, as displayed within the typology. The research therefore contributes to the literature by enabling prediction of and consequences of telework within the circumstances identified within this thesis.

The study also provides specific contributions in the following five areas:

### **10.3.2 Typology of job roles**

First, the study contributes to the teleworking literature by identifying and presenting six classifications of job role, presented in Chapter 5. The classifications of job role identified enable an enhanced understanding of the supply, demand, practice and outcomes of telework when compared to very broad or very specific classifications of job role used in much of the previous research (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Kossek et al, 2006). Furthermore, the study provides the first empirical evidence that occupational norms influence the desirability of both supplying and performing telework, sometimes over and above the nature of the tasks performed.

### **10.3.3 Senior managers' and managers' behaviour**

Second, the study contributes to the field of telework research by demonstrating that senior managers act as role models to lower-level managers with respect to telework. The findings contribute theoretically to the literature by suggesting that senior managers' participation in telework influences lower-level managers' perceived organisational support for and propensity to participate in telework. They indicate that the more extensively senior managers participate in telework, the higher lower-level managers' and employees' perceived support for telework will be and the greater the extent of telework throughout the organisation. Additionally, while coercive and mimetic pressures influence senior managers' decisions to make telework available, senior managers' endorsement of and participation in telework appears to be more strongly influenced by their perception that telework has a comparative advantage over office working.



The findings also provide important insights into the environmental and situational conditions that influence lower-managers' approach to telework, which have been absent in previous research (Dimitrova, 2003). They suggest that managers approach telework in a manner which neutralises the threats of stigmatisation and irreversibility. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that managers' selection and classification of teleworkers constitute a form of control over teleworking and non-teleworking subordinates' behaviour (Ashforth, 2001). Consequently, the study builds on previous research on managers' control and management of telework (Felstead et al, 2003, Lautsch and Kossek, 2011, Valsecchi, 2006) by demonstrating that managers' selective provision of telework serves as an additional form of control which symbolically influences employees' participation in telework.

#### **10.3.4 Non-teleworkers**

Third, to the researcher's knowledge this study provides the first investigation of how non-teleworkers influence the diffusion and practice of telework. Analysis suggests that Person-Environment Fit provides a useful explanatory tool for understanding non-teleworkers' perceptions and experiences of telework. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that non-teleworkers' resistance to telework is related to their perceived level of organisational support for telework, the 'substitutability' of teleworkers within the office, and the instrumental value of maintaining their relationships with teleworkers. Consequently, a theoretical contribution follows from the indication that the combined influence of these factors will determine non-teleworkers' behaviour towards teleworkers.

#### **10.3.5 Typology of voluntary teleworkers**

Fourth, the typology of teleworkers presented in Chapter 8 contributes to the teleworking literature by demonstrating the conditions which influence teleworkers' experiences of telework. It provides much-needed insights into the trade-offs experienced by teleworkers (Desrochers et al, 2005; Kraut, 1989) and highlights the conditions which prevent employees from teleworking. The study identified teleworkers' motivation for teleworking, their perceived support for telework and their approach to defending their teleworking arrangement and outcomes as the most important factors which determine teleworkers' experiences of telework. The findings enable the following predictions: first, that the level

of organisational support for telework and employees' human and social capital are the most important factors for mitigating professional and social isolation when teleworking (James, 2000); and second, that teleworkers' willingness and ability to rely on external sources of support provides the greatest scope for teleworkers to protect their work-life balance and well-being when teleworking.

#### **10.3.6 Gender and domestic circumstances**

Fifth, the study provides the first qualitative investigation of men and women's experiences of telework when subject to similar organisational, job and domestic conditions. The findings provide evidence that men's and women's experiences of telework are not gender blind where their work and non-work demands are equivalent, due to pervasive 'breadwinner' and 'caregiver' stereotypes which direct men and women's behaviour in a context of telework. Finally, the findings provide an additional explanation for why men have more favourable experiences of telework than women (Hartig et al, 2007). Men's lower willingness and ability to perform voluntary telework as a constrained choice enhances their self-selected suitability for telework as they are both unwilling and unable to access the most unfavourable teleworking arrangements (Peters et al, 2004).

### **10.4 Implications of the study**

This thesis began by highlighting the mutual benefits of telework which academics, the UK government and interested organisations claim are available to employees and employers from implementing the practice (Mahler, 2012; Telework Association, 2006). Given these benefits, low workforce participation in telework is considered surprising (Mahler, 2012), especially as the evidence suggests that telework is experienced positively by employees (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

The findings of this study reveal that introducing telework does not guarantee mutual benefits, unless there is an appropriate fit between the organisation's strategic use of telework and the employees' motivation for teleworking. The self-selected suitability of most organisations, managers, non-teleworkers and teleworkers to their environment often

ensures such a fit where telework is performed (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). However, the limited uptake of telework can be explained by employers' and employees' contrasting perspectives regarding the benefits of telework or their mutual appreciation of the comparative benefits of office working (Illegems and Verbeke, 2004). Consequently, the findings demonstrate that in order to understand the reasons for the limited uptake of telework and its true consequences, it is not sufficient to seek only the opinions of teleworkers and their direct managers. Furthermore, they suggest that increasing the prevalence of telework can be undesirable from the perspectives of both the organisation and employees in some cases, and that in many organisations telework is likely to remain an exceptional practice.

The findings suggest that senior management support for telework, which is demonstrated by senior managers' own participation in the practice, is essential to the uptake of telework throughout the workforce. Therefore, telework is likely to remain an exceptional practice, used only for the purposes of skill retention or personal need, in organisations where senior managers value and maintain an office presence. In particular, bureaucratic and public sector organisations, and organisations with concentrated operations and a predominance of non-technical roles, are unlikely to encourage large scale telework (Harrington and Ruppel, 1999, Harrington and Santiago, 2006; Illegems and Verbeke, 2004).

By contrast, telework is likely to increase in prevalence where senior managers accept its contribution to performance and display strong support for the practice. Performance benefits are recognised to be greatest for distributed organisations and those operating with a predominance of independent and technical roles. As organisations become more technically-focused (CBI, 2011), it is likely that senior managers will become more inclined to support telework to enhance organisational performance. On the one hand, the normalisation of telework as '*performance enhancing*' can benefit work-orientated employees by enabling them to use '*downtime*' to increase their involvement with family, and, furthermore can shield those who may otherwise be encouraged to hide telework from stigmatisation and challenges to their arrangements from non-teleworkers. On the other hand, prevalent telework can exacerbate stigmatisation for women who are assumed to be caregivers (Hoobler et al, 2009) and disadvantage those who require guaranteed flexibility through creating expectations of overwork. As women have a greater need for guaranteed

flexibility (Felstead et al, 2002) they may be inclined to selectively exit roles, organisations or even industries where telework is typical to facilitate managing their work and non-work roles by either remaining in the office or by seeking atypical telework.

Where organisational and environmental conditions lead senior managers' support for telework to be ambiguous, teleworkers' experiences and their continued demand for telework are determined most strongly by situational factors. Ambiguous senior management support for telework is likely to be evident in many organisations in the contemporary economy. Advances in technology provide recognised benefits to performance from implementing telework, while union opposition and the continued threat of financial uncertainty motivate managers to minimise risk by maintaining the status quo. Uncertainty regarding what constitutes 'appropriate' telework facilitates the practice to some extent, as managers attempt to rectify competing obligations to employers and employees by experimenting with telework. However, uncertainty also leads risk-averse managers to favour informal telework and to restrict formal telework to employees with '*good reasons*', who are likely to subsequently experience stigmatisation. Employees who are encouraged to telework informally are more likely to incur personal financial costs than those teleworking formally. Informal teleworkers often use their own equipment and waive teleworking entitlements, which make them liable for home and travel expenses (Jaakson and Kallaste, 2010). In addition to their financial disadvantage, informal teleworkers have no contractual entitlement to their arrangement. This lack of entitlement alongside the absence of implied organisational support through the provision of formal telework (Harris, 2003) exposes teleworkers to resistance from non-teleworkers and inheriting managers.

Where organisational support for telework is ambiguous, the job role a teleworker performs is essential to both their need and ability to manage work-group pressure. Unless teleworkers have specialist skills or are able to build and maintain sufficient human and social capital (James, 2000) to incentivise non-teleworkers to maintain contact with them (Becker, 1975; Bourdieu, 1983; Ducharme and Martin, 2000) they are exposed to social and professional isolation. The effort required to maintain teleworking arrangements through positive self-presentation can outstrip the benefits of telework (Becker, 1986; Peters et al, 2004). Consequently, the findings demonstrate the importance of considering the availability of substitutes when considering the level of positive self-presentation

required for teleworkers to avoid professional isolation (Van Dyne et al, 2007). Teleworkers who perform specialist roles, or who do not rely on those in the office for their own performance, can avoid professional and social isolation without enacting excessive availability and appeasement behaviour. By contrast, those with general skills who rely on non-teleworkers while performing their own role can perform only minimal telework before incurring social and professional costs.

The necessity to enact '*appropriate behaviour*' towards non-teleworkers to elicit support has particular implications for both teleworkers and managers with respect to work and non-work boundary management. Authors continue to recommend that teleworkers use segmentation strategies when teleworking to enhance their well-being, and urge organisations to encourage teleworkers to use these strategies (Kossek et al, 2006; Lautsch and Kossek, 2011; Lautsch et al, 2009). While the findings provide support that segmentation strategies enhance teleworkers' well-being, they also highlight their association with stigmatisation and professional isolation. Ambitious teleworkers who wish to avoid stigmatisation have little incentive to use segmentation strategies which reduce their availability, and managers wishing to project a performance orientation have little incentive to support them. Furthermore, where telework is provided informally or where teleworkers rely on telework, the option to perform segmentation strategies is often unavailable if teleworkers wish to avoid the withdrawal of their arrangement. Consequently segmentation strategies appear to be available only to professional men with the benefit of strong organisational support who can proactively segment work from non-work within the home or to formal teleworkers who '*push back*' against demands on their flexibility. While the former are considered '*good teleworkers*' the latter are considered unhelpful to colleagues (Lautsch & Kossek, 2011) and less valuable to the organisation.

As formal telework is associated with inflexibility and lower organisational value, employees wishing to avoid stigmatisation are compelled to opt for informal telework, even where they perform it extensively. The findings therefore demonstrate that formal classifications of telework provide little information regarding the extent to which telework is practised among employees. They also support previous suggestions that telework may be both informal and sometimes hidden in organisations (Clear and Dickson, 2005). The implication is that research which relies heavily on senior managers' responses regarding

whether telework is practised may under-represent the number of teleworkers, if managers are unaware of the extent of informal telework within their organisation. Furthermore, studies which focus on employees' responses may underestimate the extent of the practice if teleworkers are reticent in declaring their teleworking status (Huws, 1996; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). At the extreme, some teleworkers in their desperation to disassociate themselves with stigmatising telework appear to convince themselves of their non-teleworker status (Taylor, 1989).

By contrast, where studies rely on managers' reports of the availability of telework by policy (e.g. CBI / Harvey Nash Employment Trends Survey), rather than assessing its practice, the amount of telework performed is likely to be overestimated. In particular, the formal policies characteristic of the public sector (Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Taskin and Edwards, 2007) may lead the availability of telework to be reported as extensive within these organisations (CBI, 2011). However, the stigmatising effect of formal arrangements, unavailability of informal arrangements and the fear of union scrutiny may deter managers and employees from telework, resulting in low numbers of employees participating in telework within the public sector (WERS, 2004).

The study highlights the importance of acknowledging the type of telework employees perform and, in particular, whether they perform telework formally or informally, when trying to understand employees' participation in telework (Fogarty et al, 2011; Ojala, 2011; Troup and Rose, 2012). However, it also demonstrates that formal telework can be used to enhance employee-centred flexibility at the cost of stigmatisation, or to enhance performance at the cost of overwork, depending on the level of senior management support. Awareness of the organisation's motivation for supplying telework to employees and the context in which it is supplied is therefore essential to understanding the outcomes of telework, the reasons why employees participate in telework, and more importantly, the reasons why they do not.

## 10.5 Limitations

The findings of this study should be considered in the context of the following three limitations:

First, while the organisations were purposefully selected to access diverse occupational groups, the small, exclusively male sample of participants at High-Tech who conducted predominantly technical roles could have misrepresented gender and/or occupational norms as those of the wider organisation. It is noted though, that men are over-represented in technical organisations and high-skilled roles throughout the workforce (LFS, 2010) and men and technical occupations were dominant in the workforce at High-Tech. As such, it is likely that the responses from this group were representative of the organisation (Bloor and Dawson, 1994). Furthermore, interview data collected from the senior manager indicated that the other participants' responses were reflective of wider organisational norms. However, had female members of the workforce or employees who performed alternative job roles at High-Tech been represented the findings could feasibly have been different.

A second limitation is the limited inclusion of teleworkers who were teleworking atypically. For example, in the sample women opting to telework to fulfil care-giving responsibilities were over-represented and men acting as primary caregivers were unavailable. While this is representative of the workforce and teleworking populations more generally (Diamond, 2002; Hewlett, 2002; Kossek et al, 2006; Marsh and Musson, 2008; Silver, 2003; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001) the intent was to understand teleworkers' experiences within diverse conditions to help to explain the impediments to the spread of telework. In consequence, the inclusion of more atypical teleworkers would have been desirable. Future research could specifically target atypical teleworkers, such as teleworking men in low-skilled roles with primary caring responsibilities, if such arrangements are permitted, to assess the 'type' of telework these men are likely to perform.

Related to the previous point, ambiguous company data supplied at Tel-Com, and the organisational and occupational requirements at High-Tech meant that some employees listed as non-teleworkers performed occasional telework. Furthermore, some non-teleworkers at all three organisations had performed telework in the past. The discovery

that a number of ‘non-teleworking’ employees were teleworkers is a significant finding in itself as it enabled the identification of unofficial ‘enhancing’ and ‘hidden’ types of telework, and provides additional evidence that the number of teleworkers in the workforce is higher than anticipated (Fogarty et al, 2011). The difficulty of separating teleworkers from non-teleworkers also serves as a salient example of the complexity of the practice under investigation. However, it should be acknowledged that previous experience of teleworking may produce different perceptions of the practice to those who have never teleworked (Frank and Lowe, 2003). Therefore, responses from ‘genuine’ non-teleworkers were fewer than had been hoped for. In High-Tech in particular, the absence of true non-teleworkers prevented analysis of the full extent of the consequences of an inappropriate Person-Environment Fit for non-teleworking employees.

Finally, aside from Enhancers, limited numbers of the other ‘types’ of voluntary teleworker were apparent within the study. (A summary of the numbers of identified types is presented in Appendix 8). The limited numbers made extensive comparisons of these teleworkers’ experiences impossible. However, given that Enhancers consistently perceived teleworking as personally and professionally beneficial, while all other ‘types’ of voluntary teleworker acknowledged trade-offs for their arrangement, the restricted numbers of other types of voluntary teleworker is unsurprising. In particular, the unfavourable outcomes identified and the apparent difficulty of accessing telework where support is low means that large numbers of Appeasers, Avoiders and Retainers would be unexpected. As a result, these ‘types’ of teleworkers are notable by their absence. However, the limited numbers of particular types of voluntary teleworkers represented in the study signifies that more research is required to examine the conditions which lead to variations in practice between the types of teleworker.

## **10.6 Future research**

Three potential avenues for future research are proposed:

First, there was evidence in the study that conducting telework formally on a ‘dedicated’ basis, where employees have no fixed desk in the office, may reduce the stigmatising effect



of other flexible working arrangements and, in particular, a part-time working status (Epstein et al, 1999). Some participants described the benefits of telework in alleviating ‘empty-chair syndrome’ where visible reminders in the office, such as the unoccupied desk and chair, highlight a part-time worker’s regular absence. While the scope of the current study prevented a full investigation of this scenario, future investigations could focus on the influence of teleworking on part-time workers’ perceptions of stigmatisation. In particular, further research could evaluate whether teleworking is considered ‘the lesser of two evils’ in all circumstances, or only in certain organisations or professions and could consider the influence of gender on the outcomes of combining these forms of atypical work.

Second, future research might specifically examine the experiences of voluntary and involuntary teleworkers within similar and different job roles, and with differing family and career orientations to assess the relative influence of employee choice on the outcomes of performing telework. While previous research suggests that it is preferable to provide telework voluntarily to employees (Fowler, 1996), those conducting standardised roles or working within non-technical teams were often deterred from teleworking by anticipated social and professional costs. If telework were to be imposed by the organisation, employees in roles considered less acceptable for voluntary telework might experience better outcomes from teleworking due to the ‘automatic’ acceptability of involuntary telework. For example, involuntary teleworkers may be less inclined to reciprocate towards colleagues through increased flexibility and overwork or *‘stay under the radar’* where teleworking is a requirement and therefore not a personal concession. A reduced compulsion to overwork could, in turn, produce a more favourable work-life balance, particularly for less career-oriented employees within roles where performing voluntary telework is considered less acceptable. However, further investigation is required to assess whether this is the case.

Third, researchers might consider in more depth the instrumental components of employees’ working relationships which influence non-teleworkers’ support for telework and examine more closely the role of teleworkers’ own behaviour in eliciting support. The findings indicate that where teleworkers act towards non-teleworkers in a manner which reinforces non-teleworkers’ positive self-perceptions, they are more able to elicit support from non-teleworkers. As non-teleworkers’ support has been found to mitigate the negative

outcomes of performing telework on teleworkers' OI (Wiesenfeld et al, 2001) the potential for teleworkers to influence their own OI through the behaviour they enact towards non-teleworkers warrants further investigation.

Finally, managers might consider how teleworkers' human and social capital can be maintained or managed to help prevent teleworking employees from being intentionally or unintentionally sidelined. For example, structuring incentives for non-teleworkers or enhancing training for teleworkers may help to prevent de-skilling and enable teleworking employees to be utilised to their full potential (Becker, 1975; Coleman, 1986).

## **10.7 Summary**

This chapter has presented an overview of the thesis by providing a brief summary of each of its chapters. The key contributions of the study have been outlined and, in particular, the unique approach taken to investigating the diffusion and practice of telework through a qualitative, multi-level analysis has been highlighted. The implications of the study were considered and it was suggested that as organisations become more technically-focused, managers may become more inclined to experiment with telework. However, the level of organisational support for telework will determine the manner in which it is practised and therefore the outcomes of telework for employees and the attractiveness of participating in telework. Finally, this chapter has also considered the limitations of the study and suggested some areas for future research.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Access Proposal Letter**

My name is Amanda Jones and I am currently carrying out a PhD at King's College London where I will be investigating the growing phenomenon of telework. In particular I will be examining its practice and the consequences of employing home-based teleworkers within organisations.

I am writing to you following a very interesting conversation with *contact* about telework at Tel-Com as I believe that your progressive stance in allowing staff to work from home and other locations makes Tel-Com an ideal context in which to investigate this increasingly popular working method. For this reason I would very much like to present you with a brief description of my proposed research.

I am particularly interested in three specific aspects of teleworking practice:

- The effect of teleworking on the attitudes of employees.
- The impact of teleworking on non-teleworking members of the workforce and their subsequent behaviour.
- How teleworking is experienced by both teleworkers and non-teleworkers within different job roles/occupations.
- The group dynamics at play in teams of teleworkers and non-teleworkers and the role of managers

From this research the organisation will gain important insights into the experiences of both teleworkers and, somewhat uniquely, non-teleworkers and the impact of teleworking on employees' performance and well-being. These aspects are strongly related to, among other things, employees' propensity to work over and above what is required of them, their level of organisational commitment, their likelihood of being absent or of leaving the organisation and particularly the overall success of the teleworking arrangement itself. Additionally, all these factors have been strongly linked to business performance outcomes for organisations.

Both my experience of conducting successful research in this area before and my time spent working as a management consultant enable me to offer a professional, practical and sensitive approach to the project. I will also be able to provide focused feedback to your organisation which will be of application and use. Finally, as my PhD is funded by King's College London, I would not require additional funding from the organisation, just the necessary participation.

If you believe that your organisation may benefit from participating in this project, I would be delighted to provide you with further information or to arrange a meeting where I can explain the study in more detail. I would also be happy to discuss any additional elements of your teleworking arrangement that you believe would benefit from investigation. My contact details are:

[Mobile number and email provided]

I look forward to hearing from you,

With kind regards,

Amanda Jones

## **Appendix 2**

### **Original Interview Schedules**

As semi-structures interviews are used to provide flexibility, the order of the questioning may vary considerably between participants. Also throughout the process relevant questions may be added and others de-emphasised in accordance with the grounded theory method.

#### **Interview Questions for Senior Managers**

##### ***Greet participant and brief explanation of the interview process***

*I would like to begin by discussing teleworking within your organisation:*

- What is the primary motivation for your organisation in offering teleworking?
- What do you think are the main benefits of teleworking?
- What do you believe would be the main barriers to the success of teleworking in your organisation / industry?
- How is teleworking supported / promoted within your organisation?
- How far do you believe your organisation can expand teleworking within the workforce?
- How do you think teleworking affects organisational performance?
- Has implementing teleworking affected the layout of the office?
- Other impacts?

*I would like to move on to discuss your own circumstances:*

- Can you tell me about your job?
- Would/do you opt for teleworking yourself? Why / why not?

*I would now like to discuss your views regarding teleworkers:*

- Do you think it's a beneficial if employees work from home? Why/why not?
- How do you think people in the organisation view teleworkers?
- Do you have this view?
- How do you think teleworkers should be managed / monitored?

- How flexible do you feel teleworkers should be towards their role / the organisation?
- What impact, if any, do you believe teleworking has on teleworkers' rewards/career?
- Do you think teleworking impacts workplace relationships? How? With what effect?
- Do you think men and women experience teleworking differently? How? Why?

*I would now like to discuss how you think teleworking might affect your experiences of work?*

- Do you think having teleworking subordinates would/does affect your own job/performance? How?
- Do you think having teleworking subordinates does/would affect your relationship with your staff?

*I now would like, if I may, to take some of your personal information.*

- Sex of senior manager:
- What is your age?
- Are you married, single, living with partner?
- Do you have children? How many? How old?
- Who primarily looks after the children in your house?
- What is your highest achieved level of education?
- How long have you worked for your organisation?
- How many hours are you contracted to work per week?
- How many hours per week do you usually work in practice?
- How many hours per day do you usually work?
- What are your usual hours of work?

*Finally in general:*

- What do you believe are the most positive aspects of teleworking?
- What do you believe are the most negative aspects of teleworking?
- Do you have any additional comments regarding teleworking which you feel are important?
- Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for participating in the research, your co-operation is greatly appreciated. If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me using the information provided.

## **Interview Questions for Managers**

*Greet participant and brief explanation of the interview process.*

Can you tell me about your job role?

*I would now like to discuss your choices with regards to teleworking:*

- Would you opt for teleworking yourself? Why/why not?
- What aspects of your job would / would not lend themselves to teleworking?
- Have you permitted your subordinates to work from home? Why/why not?
- Are you pleased that you your subordinates work from home?
- What criteria do you personally use to determine whether you will accept a request from a subordinate?
- What methods of performance monitoring do you use for teleworkers? Why?
- Is this the same as for non-teleworkers?
- Is teleworking common in your role/team/organisation?
- How do your peer-level colleagues feel about teleworking?

*I would now like to move on to discuss your view of teleworkers:*

- What do you think are the main benefits and drawbacks of teleworking for employees?
- Do you believe that teleworkers have sufficient contact with the organisation?
- Do you believe that teleworking has had any impact on your subordinates' productivity (teleworkers/ non-teleworkers)?
- What expectations do you have of teleworkers regarding their availability?
- How do you believe others in the organisation view teleworkers?
- How do you view teleworkers?
- How, if at all do you think teleworking may impact teleworkers' career prospects?
- How do you think teleworking impacts employees' relationships in the organisation?
- Do you think having subordinates work from home has in any way changed the way you distribute tasks?



*I would like to discuss your experience of working with teleworkers:*

- Do you believe working with teleworkers has changed your job/performance at all? / How? (Please can you give an example?)
- What do you believe are the main differences between managing a teleworker and managing a non-teleworking employee?
- How important do you think non-teleworkers role is in supporting teleworkers?
- Has your subordinates' teleworking affected your relationship with them?
- Do you think men and women experience telework differently? Why/why not?

*I would like to move on to discuss your organisation:*

- What do you believe the primary motivation is for your organisation in offering teleworking?
- How do senior managers approach telework in your opinion?
- How far do you believe your organisation can expand teleworking within the workforce?
- How does your organisation offering teleworking make you feel towards the organisation?
- What, if any, do you believe would be the main barriers to the success of teleworking in your organisation?
- To which jobs or organisations do you think teleworking is most suited and Why?

*I now would like, if I may to take some of your personal information.*

- Sex of manger?
- What is your age?
- Are you married, single, living with partner?
- Do you have children? How many? How old?
- Who primarily looks after the children in your house?
- What is your highest achieved level of education?
- How long have you worked for your organisation?
- How long have you worked with teleworkers?
- How many hours are you contracted to work per week?
- How many hours per week do you usually work in practice?
- How many hours per day do you usually work?
- What are your usual hours of work?

*Finally in general:*

- What do you believe are the most positive aspects of teleworking?
- What do you believe are the most negative aspects of teleworking?
- Do you have any additional comments regarding teleworking which you feel are important?
- Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for participating in the research, your co-operation is greatly appreciated. If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me using the information provided.

## **Interview Questions for non-teleworkers**

*Greet participant and brief explanation of the interview process.*

*First I would like to discuss your choices with regards to teleworking*

- Can you tell me about your job?
- Have had any experience of teleworking? If so:
- What influenced you to stop teleworking?
- If not: Would you consider becoming a teleworker? Why / Why not?
- How do you think your manager would react if you requested teleworking?
- How do you think your colleagues would react if you requested teleworking?
- Do you think that teleworking could be beneficial for successfully conducting your job / increasing your productivity?
- What impact, if any, do you believe teleworking would have on your rewards/career?
- Do you think teleworking would have a positive effect on your work-life balance?
- How do you believe teleworking would impact your rewards/career?

*I would like to move on to discuss your general views on teleworking:*

- Do you feel that teleworking is a valuable practice within the organisation / industry?
- Which hours do you believe teleworkers should work? Why?
- How do you believe teleworkers are viewed by office-based staff?
- Is this how you view teleworkers?
- How, if at all do you believe teleworkers benefit from working at home?
- Do you think teleworking is more appropriate to some occupations than to others? Which? Why?
- Do you think men and women experience teleworking differently? How? Why?

*I would now like to move on to discuss your experiences of working with teleworkers:*

- Do you enjoy working with teleworkers?

- Can you tell me about any ways in which working with teleworkers has affected your job?
- How often do you contact teleworkers?
- Do you believe you have sufficient contact with teleworkers? Why/why not?
- Do you have any problems communicating with teleworkers?
- How do you manage your relationship with teleworkers?
- How do you make sure others' teleworking does not affect you negatively?
- Have your relationships with teleworkers been affected at all since they began to telework? How?
- How has your relationship with your manager been affected by others teleworking?

*I would like to move on to discuss your organisation:*

- What do you believe the primary motivation is for your organisation in offering teleworking?
- How do senior managers approach telework in your opinion?
- How far do you believe your organisation can expand teleworking within the workforce?
- How does your organisation offering teleworking make you feel towards the organisation?
- What do you believe would be the main barriers to the success of teleworking in your organisation?

*I now would like, if I may to take some of your personal information.*

- Sex of Non- teleworker?
- What is your age?
- Are you married, single, living with partner?
- Do you have children? How many? How old?
- Who primarily looks after the children in your house?
- What is your highest achieved level of education?
- How long have you worked for your organisation?
- How long have you worked with teleworkers?
- How many hours are you contracted to work per week?
- How many hours per week do you usually work in practice?
- How many hours per day do you usually work?

- What are your usual hours of work?

*Finally in general:*

- What do you believe the most positive aspects of working with teleworkers are?
- What do you believe the most negative aspects of working with teleworkers are?
- Do you have any additional comments regarding teleworking which you feel are important?
- Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for participating in the research, your co-operation is greatly appreciated. If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me using the information provided.

### **Interview questions for teleworkers**

\*Where subjects have not worked from home long enough to respond to certain questions, they will be asked to state their expectations.

#### ***Greet participant and brief explanation of the interview process.***

*I would like to begin by discussing your teleworking situation:*

- Can you describe your job role?
- What was your motivation for teleworking?
- Are you happy that you opted to work from home?
- What do you think makes your job suitable for teleworking?
- What makes you suitable for teleworking?
- Is teleworking common in your role/team/organisation?
- How do you think your teleworking is viewed by others?
- Do you think certain occupations are more suited to teleworking than others?
- How, if at all do you think your gender affects your experience of teleworking?

*I would like to move on to discuss any effects that teleworking has had on the non-work aspects of your life.*

- Has teleworking affected your ability to fulfil your non-work responsibilities/interests?
- What do you do with the time saved from commuting?
- Do you spend more/less time working now than you work from home? What factors do you think impact this?
- Is it important to you to maintain a distinction between the work and non-work aspects of your life?
- If yes – how do you achieve this distinction?
- Are you available to be contacted outside of your contracted hours?
- How do you think teleworking has affected your experiences of home life?
- Other comments?

*I would now like to move on to discuss your experiences of work*

- Do you believe teleworking has affected your skills? Can you give examples?

- Do you believe working from home has changed the way in which you conduct your tasks? Please explain
- Can you describe any effects that teleworking has had on:
  - Performance?
  - Rewards?
  - Career?
  - Training?
- What do you think has caused these effects?
- How has teleworking affected your social experiences of work?
- Do you have somewhere to go when you enter the organisation? Where? Why?

*I would now like to discuss your colleagues*

- Do you believe that your colleagues are helpful you when you work from home?
- How, if at all, has working from home affected the amount of contact you have with your office-based colleagues?
- How, if at all do you believe your relationships with your office based colleagues have been affected by you teleworking?
- How do you believe office-based employees view teleworkers in general?
- Why do you believe they have these perceptions?
- Do you believe they view you personally in this way?

*I would now like to move on to discuss your manager:*

- How do you think your manager feels about you working from home? Why?
- How is your performance monitored by your manager?
- Has this changed since you have become a teleworker? How?
- How would you describe your relationship with your manager?
- Do you believe you have sufficient contact with your manager?

*I would now like to discuss how teleworking has affected your feelings towards your organisation*

- What do you believe the organisation's primary motivation is for offering teleworking?
- How do senior managers approach telework in your opinion?
- Do you think teleworking is encouraged in your organisation? Why?

- Do you think the organisation derives benefits from you teleworking?
- How does having the opportunity to telework make you feel towards your organisation?
- Has teleworking affected your intentions to leave the organisation (why?)
- How far do you believe your organisation can expand teleworking within the workforce?
- What do you believe would be the main barriers to the success of teleworking in your organisation?

*I now would like, if I may, to take some of your personal information:*

- Sex of the teleworker?
- What is your age?
- Are you married, single, living with partner?
- Do you have children? How many? How old?
- Who primarily looks after the children in your house?
- What is your highest achieved level of education?
- How long have you worked for your organisation?
- How long have you been a teleworker?
- How many hours are you contracted to work per week?
- How many hours per week do you usually work in practice?
- How many hours per day do you usually work?
- What are your usual hours of work?

*Finally in general:*

- What do you believe are the most positive aspects of working from home?
- What do you believe are the most negative aspects of working from home?
- Will you actively be pursuing teleworking in the future?
- Do you have any additional comments regarding teleworking which you feel are important?
- Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for participating in the research, your co-operation is greatly appreciated. If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me using the information provided.



### **Appendix 3**

#### **Example of observational field notes: – Tel-Com Sales Team Meeting**

**Location** – office positioned above a Tel-Com retail store.

**Description of context:** The office is used for employees and associated personnel to hot-desk when they require an office location for meetings with clients etc. and for teams to have their team meetings. Meeting took place around a table, manager in a prominent position with most people facing him and with a screen to his left used by the manager throughout and visiting presenters.

**Participants:** Corporate sales teams working within industrial markets sector team meetings. Employees from finance marketing and risk management were also present along with suppliers and a specialist from a high level of sales.

**Frequency of meeting:** Once per month

**Atmosphere:** Casual, low key, but professional, interrupted with humour – atmosphere becoming more and less professional at different times of day, depending on who is leading the conversation. When the manager leads the conversation it alternates between humour and serious topic such as target achievement and compliance.

#### **Morning:**

The meeting was used for 2 purposes. In the morning the focus was on team issues such as staffing, the number of accounts sales staff were expected to service and sales relevant discussions which focused on clients. This part of the meeting was closed and to allow any sensitive issues to be '*hashed out*'. I was not invited to this part of the meeting as it was felt inappropriate for a researcher to be present at this time. When the manager was asked about this, he suggested that a number of conversations with staff were necessary which they may

not be aware of in advance and therefore may feel uncomfortable being party to for the first time with an observer present.

### **Lunch:**

I met my contact at in a cafe in Central London near to where the meeting was taking place. My contact was having lunch with three other members of the sales team who had all been present at the meeting earlier in the day. I was aware of the informal atmosphere at the lunch, and also of their curiosity that a researcher would be interested in what they obviously saw as 'just another one of their sales meetings'. I made a mental note, that I would need to explain the research briefly, but made an effort to ingratiate myself and put the members of the meeting at ease in order to try and minimise my impact on their behaviour. Potentially due to what appeared to be their extroverted personality types and their excitement at the rare opportunity to see colleagues, this did not seem to be too difficult to overcome. I acknowledged that they were also anticipating others joining both the lunch and the meeting later in the afternoon some who they knew well, some they had met previously and others who they had yet to meet. This made me think that they were used to meeting various interested parties and again reduced my fear that my presence would influence their behaviour.

While at lunch, and in the absence of their manager, the sales staff discussed a number of issues relating to their recent experiences of work. Here they were able to air their grievances less formally and discuss issues that they believed were important to them that had been raised that morning. Most importantly however they were able to align their perceptions and forge an understanding of the way they collectively conceived things. This seemed particularly important as the staff were all teleworkers and spent little time in close proximity to each other where these perceptions could be shared easily and spontaneously. They all seemingly experienced the same team structure, managerial relationships, targets and work pressures but were unfamiliar with the way they were experienced by others in their daily jobs. They were able to use this time to reinforce their professional identity and to achieve self-verification. If they had experienced something unfavourably, they were able to classify this as unfavourable in the light of the opinions of others who would relay

similar experiences or they were able to rectify the experiences in their heads as being slightly more positive where others provided them with the information they were missing.

Another use of the informal ‘down-time’ was that those doing a similar job were able to anticipate what was going to occur in the afternoon. The discussions about this topic were fairly intense as they have less time to achieve a more general consensus day to day. The intensity of making up for lost time meant that they were quickly able to align their perceptions and even explained to each other the actions that they were going to take later in the day or to provide a commentary of why they may not behave in a way that others expected. This entailed providing a description of what had been going on in their daily jobs, what they needed to achieve and why and therefore, why they would have to act in certain ways towards certain people, particularly if they felt this deviated from the expectations of others the others. For example, some individuals were displeased with a particular individual and were planning to put up a united front by airing their grievances simultaneously, but by projecting this as an unplanned discussion. However another individual was able to explain that they were not going to join the alliance as they *‘needed something’* from the individual who was the target of others’ displeasure. Consequently this informal discussion had prevented them from being put ‘on the spot’

### **The afternoon meeting:**

**First speaker:** The afternoon session was used for meeting important stakeholders outside the team. A demonstration of some changes to one of the computer systems was conducted by a member of the finance department and people were invited to watch and ask questions. It was obvious from the interaction of the group that the computer specialist did not garner a great deal of respect from those present. During the talk, many of the team members ignored the individual, sending text messages, quietly talking among themselves and even answering phone calls. Some individuals exchanged fairly blatant disapproving glances at each other. This seemed to demonstrate to the individual conducting the demonstration that their message was not a welcome one and the manner in which they collectively participated in the obvious disapproval communicated consensus of this opinion.

**Second speaker:** Following this, a talk was delivered by a specialist in the field. In the second talk the speaker visibly achieved engagement with the team and used a number of methods of maintaining their attention such as looking around the room and keeping eye contact with various people. The meeting participants responded well to this and reciprocated through attention and obvious agreement which demonstrated consensus.

**Dynamic:** The meeting was very casual and a pleasant dynamic existed between team members. There was a lot of use of humour among the team and especially from the manager. He was able to maintain his authority while still remaining accessible, which, later discussion revealed was his intention. Clothes were casual. At various points people would check their phones or be on their laptop while the meeting was taking place. Also if people were in the room but were not required to speak or pay attention they would sit aside from the tables and 'hot-desk'. Members of the team would periodically leave the room for one to one meetings. The manner of communication between individuals who were talking made a big difference to the way they were received by the group. Additionally the reliability and accessibility of a person when they were remote caused them to have their comments accepted or dismissed when they were face to face. One member was notably able to use the forum to influence and receive 'buy in' to his previous ideas, to which he had no response from remote communications.

There was a definite difference of opinion among team workers regarding working preferences. One of the teleworkers said they really would not care if they never went into the office – this person was in a very specialist role. However, others complained of distractions in the home and of social isolation. One of the team expressed a concern that others had no idea what they did. Another team member commented that they felt that they had struggled as a teleworker as they did not know who to go to for information or advice. They said that the networks they had built up in their old job were invaluable and that they were unable to replicate them as everyone was so dispersed. However, as teleworking was 'inevitable' within the team, they anticipated that accessing a more favourable working environment would involve exiting the organisation or role. A female member of the team said that she would go into an office just because she preferred it, or just because she felt like it that day, though she also said that having a partner who also worked from home in the same room as her caused working from home to be more of an issue and she would

rather come into the office than have to do that. In general people liked the option to work in an office but also enjoyed working at home.

### **Benchmarking and Success**

One of the team members discussed celebrating success as being one of the major 'motivators' for sales people – they commented that *'you get a massive account and you close the deal and then when at home you turn round smiling but there is no one there'*. This scenario led to feelings of isolation. They believe they work hard and do a very good job and in some cases employees feel that they are undervalued and that their employer is not keeping their *'side of the deal'* as they feel that their work load is being increased simply because the company can 'get away with it'. This was also related to feelings of isolation. However, everyone enjoyed working within what they termed a *'great culture'* and said that they really like working for Tel-Com – the fact that they travel a lot and meet up in different locations makes people feel that the company is dynamic.

### **Post Meeting socialisation:**

There was quite a lot of note writing and note passing going on in the meeting and silent facial expressions and in jokes, sometimes directed at other members of the group this was more common between the people who had to leave before the end of the meeting than it was with those who were going to the post-meeting socialisation. It seemed that they wanted to make up for the lack of non-work related interaction with those who would miss out later and demonstrate that they were valued socially within the group.

After the meeting most people from the team, the manager and some of the clients went to a local pub in central London for drinks. There was an entirely different atmosphere and although the meeting was still referred to and discussed this was in a much more light-hearted manner. The dynamic of the conversation became much more jovial than during the meeting and especially a lot of humour was directed at the manager. This very much seemed to dispel a lot of the grievances that some of the team members had aired during lunch and it seemed that now they had had the chance to discuss these with each other 'face-to-face' they felt that they had a genuine shared feeling about the issue. This feeling

seemed to give them the confidence and legitimacy to voice their opinion. Alongside this, the informal setting allowed them to do so in a non-threatening manner where they could comment on their displeasure relating to work matters off the record as they were now communicating with the manager as a 'friend' and 'human' rather than an authority figure.

**Overview memo:**

The team experienced a succession of diverse interactions over the day. They moved from formal development issues, including sensitive personal performance discussions with their manager to lunch where the same issues were discussed informally between peers. Here peers provided support, aligned opinions and formed coalitions, planning how they were going to act collectively in anticipated situations later in the day. Following lunch, they received presentations from internal IT and finance representatives and visiting suppliers. During these presentations the team appeared to verbally and non-verbally communicate their feelings to each other, at times making faces or scribbling messages on scraps of paper. The social experience that took place over post-meeting drinks was enhanced by these earlier interactions as subordinates collectively communicated their previously 'agreed-upon' opinions to their manager through light-hearted banter. These shared, focused, intense experiences resulted in a feeling that the team had been through a lot since this morning and they seemed more unified for doing so.

**Appendix 4**  
**Table of Categories**

Categories				
The Acceptability of Telework				
	The Fit of telework with the organisational environment	The Opportunities and Threats of Telework for Managers	The Receptiveness of the Workgroup	The Attractiveness of Performing Telework
Conditions relating to perceptions of acceptable telework	<p><i>Predominance of job types</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Internal standardised</li> <li>– External standardised</li> <li>– Internal independent</li> <li>– External independent</li> <li>– Technical team</li> <li>– Non-technical team</li> </ul> <p><i>Supporting and parallel policies and practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Content</li> <li>– Consistency</li> </ul>	<p><i>Expected behaviour with respect to telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expected</li> <li>– Discouraged</li> <li>– Situational suitability</li> </ul> <p><i>Anticipated experiences of telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Irreversibility</li> <li>– Stigmatisation</li> <li>– Personal and professional outcomes</li> <li>– Internal / external support</li> <li>– Competing obligations ‘good/bad manager’</li> <li>– Organisational norms</li> </ul>	<p><i>Perceptions of telework within the organisation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inevitable</li> <li>– Desirable</li> <li>– Ambiguous benefits</li> </ul> <p><i>Suitability within the role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Acceptable</li> <li>– Unacceptable</li> <li>– No difference</li> </ul> <p><i>Manner in which telework is introduced</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Access</li> <li>– Availability</li> </ul>	<p><i>Reasons for choice of working method</i></p> <p><b>Improved performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Job characteristics</li> <li>– Occupational norms of telework</li> <li>– Organisational norms of telework</li> <li>– Awareness of stereotypes</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Gender</li> <li>– Domestic circumstances</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred life-style</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Domestic environment</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Workgroup and environmental factors</li> </ul>

	<b>The Fit of telework with the organisational environment</b>	<b>The Opportunities and Threats of Telework for Managers</b>	<b>The Receptiveness of the Workgroup</b>	<b>The Attractiveness of Performing Telework</b>
<i>Cont</i> <b>Conditions relating to perceptions of acceptable telework</b>	<p><b>Industry/organisational factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Salience (i.e. Living the Brand)</li> <li>– Availability of technology</li> <li>– Organisational Purpose and Presentation</li> <li>– Ownership/history</li> <li>– Organisational / client spread</li> <li>– Competitors practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental pressures</b></p> <p><b>Trade Union Presence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Position on telework</li> <li>– Union strength</li> </ul> <p><b>Wider contextual conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic climate</li> <li>– Government policy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Justifications for approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Client outcomes</li> <li>– Organisational outcomes</li> <li>– Subordinate outcomes</li> <li>– Concession</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental justification</b></p> <p>Industry norms</p> <p>Organisational norms</p> <p><b>Appropriateness of telework within subordinates roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Autonomy and trust</li> <li>– Communication</li> <li>– Wellbeing</li> <li>– Work/group relationships</li> <li>– Learning and development</li> <li>– Employee fit with telework</li> </ul> <p><b>Subordinates' personal circumstances</b></p> <p>Preference</p> <p>Need</p>	<p><b>Actual or anticipated experiences of telework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Job characteristics</li> <li>– Norms of teleworking</li> <li>– Preferences/fit with environment</li> <li>– Teleworker behaviour</li> </ul> <p><b>Leverage to produce preferred environment</b></p> <p><b>Perceived support for telework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Justification for telework</li> <li>– Classification of telework</li> </ul> <p><b>Availability of substitutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Job type/norms of telework</li> </ul> <p><b>Instrumental value of relationships with teleworkers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Performance</li> </ul> <p><b>Progression</b></p>	<p><b>Perceived support for telework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strong/weak</li> <li>– Internal / external support</li> <li>– Organisation benefit</li> <li>– Manager's behaviour</li> <li>– Colleague behaviour</li> <li>– Partner's earning status</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies of maintaining acceptable telework</b>	<p><b>Supporting policies and practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Creating 'Fit'</li> <li>– Encouraged behaviours</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supportive behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establish rapport</li> <li>– Reduce overwork/professional isolation</li> <li>– Planned meetings</li> <li>– Recruit for teleworkers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supportive behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Include teleworker</li> <li>– Doing favours</li> <li>– Demonstrating sensitivity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Good teleworkers behaviour</b></p> <p><b>Enhancing performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Segmentation while working within the home</li> <li>– Manage family around work</li> </ul>



	<b>The Fit of telework with the organisational environment</b>	<b>The Opportunities and Threats of Telework for Managers</b>	<b>The Receptiveness of the Workgroup</b>	<b>The Attractiveness of Performing Telework</b>
<p><i>Cont</i></p> <p><b>Strategies of maintaining acceptable telework</b></p>	<p><i>Senior management strategies of communicating support for telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Role-modelling</li> <li>– Use of space</li> <li>– Use of technology</li> <li>– Symbolic behaviour</li> </ul> <p><i>Trade union strategies of influencing telework:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Resist involuntary telework</li> <li>– Specify entitlements</li> <li>– Provide external support</li> </ul>	<p><i>Appeasement/concealment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hide telework</li> <li>– Emphasise trust</li> <li>– Make telework conditional on ‘causing no problems’</li> <li>– Provide informal telework</li> </ul> <p><i>Discourage restriction/resist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communicate unfavourable perceptions</li> <li>– Initiate last minute meetings</li> <li>– Emphasise lack of fit</li> <li>– Permit exceptional telework</li> <li>– Redistribute tasks</li> <li>– Entice back in</li> </ul> <p><i>Prohibition/withdrawal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Change teleworkers’ status</li> <li>– Push business care</li> <li>– Environmental justification</li> <li>– Disciplinary action</li> <li>– Maintain Proxies for presence</li> </ul>	<p><i>Support Preferred behaviour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reward atypical telework</li> <li>– Reward preferred interaction</li> </ul> <p><i>Protect performance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sidelining</li> <li>– Conduct tasks</li> </ul> <p><i>Overt resistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Intentional ignoring/withdrawing help</li> <li>– Forming coalitions</li> <li>– Telling tales</li> <li>– Confrontation</li> </ul> <p><i>Covert resistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Projecting undesirability of telework</li> <li>– Support atypical telework</li> <li>– Create preferred environment</li> </ul>	<p><i>Proactive balance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Accepting trade-offs</li> <li>– Manage work around family</li> </ul> <p><i>Appeasement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Full-flexibility</li> <li>– Champion</li> </ul> <p><i>Reciprocation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Gratitude</li> <li>– Availability</li> </ul> <p><i>Bad teleworkers behaviour</i></p> <p><i>Resistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inflexibility/segmentation by reducing hours of work</li> </ul> <p><i>Concealment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strategies of self-reliance</li> <li>– Hiding telework</li> </ul> <p><i>Integration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Managing family and work demands simultaneously</li> </ul>

	<b>The Fit of telework with the organisational environment</b>	<b>The Opportunities and Threats of Telework for Managers</b>	<b>The Receptiveness of the Workgroup</b>	<b>The Attractiveness of Performing Telework</b>
<b>Consequences which establish the acceptability of telework</b>	<p><i>Organisational norms of Telework</i></p> <p><i>Strategic use of telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Performance</li> <li>– Recruitment/retention</li> <li>– Cost minimisation</li> <li>– Practicality</li> </ul> <p><i>Prevalence of telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Telework is the organisational norm</li> <li>– Telework is the exception</li> <li>– Telework has situational suitability</li> </ul> <p><i>Perceptions and expectations of telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Necessity</li> <li>– Benefit</li> <li>– Risk</li> <li>– Moral responsibility</li> </ul> <p><i>De-selection of practices with an inappropriate fit</i></p>	<p><i>Norms of telework practice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Effectiveness of supporting practices</li> </ul> <p><i>Receptiveness of the work-group</i></p> <p><i>De-selection of manager</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Voluntary</li> <li>– Involuntary</li> </ul>	<p><i>Workgroup norms of telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Acceptable telework</li> <li>– Unacceptable telework</li> </ul> <p><i>De-selection of non-teleworker</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Voluntary</li> <li>– Involuntary</li> </ul>	<p><i>Teleworkers' experiences and outcomes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Favourable/unfavourable</li> <li>– Professional consequences</li> <li>– Social consequences</li> <li>– Relationship consequences</li> <li>– Work-life balance</li> <li>– Stigmatisation</li> </ul> <p><i>Norms of telework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Classifications of telework</li> <li>– Voluntary/involuntary</li> <li>– Formal / Informal</li> <li>– Extent of telework</li> </ul> <p><i>De-selection of teleworker</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ordered back in</li> <li>– Come back in</li> <li>– Selective exiting</li> </ul>

	<b>The Fit of telework with the organisational environment</b>	<b>The Opportunities and Threats of Telework for Managers</b>	<b>The Receptiveness of the Workgroup</b>	<b>The Attractiveness of Performing Telework</b>
<b>Processes affecting the acceptability of telework</b>	<p><i>Changing organisational conditions</i> Diversification Merger Expansion</p> <p><i>Changing environment conditions</i> –Economic climate –Workforce demographics –Employee relations –Changing public perception (modern life)</p> <p><i>Overriding influence of Industry or Occupational norms</i></p>	<p><i>Inheriting teleworkers</i></p> <p><i>Getting used to telework</i> –Inevitable telework –Good teleworker behaviour –Establishment of processes</p> <p><i>Re-evaluating telework</i> –Change in perceived organisational support –Change in preferences following experience –Change in subordinates job role –Change in subordinates personal circumstances</p>	<p><i>Getting used to telework</i> –Good teleworkers behaviour –Realisation of Inevitable telework –Learning to manage teleworkers</p> <p><i>Increasing resistance</i> –Bad teleworker behaviour –Management behaviour</p> <p><i>Change in support</i> –Organisational support –Management support</p>	<p><i>Adapting to telework</i> –Learning when to stop –Learning when to be availability / appropriate communication</p> <p><i>Overcoming/confirming stereotypes</i> –Men work-orientation –Female as caregiver</p> <p><i>Changing personal circumstances</i> –Increase caring requirements –Reduced caring requirements</p> <p><i>Changing professional circumstances</i> –Change in organisational ownership/strategy –Change in manager</p>

## **Appendix 5**

### **Memo set 2: – HR policies and practices:**

#### **Socialisation / induction:**

##### **A. *Demonstrating fit through teleworking***

*'It's kind of a baptism of fire, they need to hit the ground running so they're pretty much out of here from day one and I guess they either sink or swim' (Manager – High-Tech)*

Members of the team had to be very independent and often people were left to their own devices, even at entry where there seemed to be very little by way of physical induction. Some spoke of this as a *'baptism of fire'* or referred to having to be able to *'hit the ground running'*. It was recognized that this could be quite disconcerting for people who would either *'sink or swim'*. The use of *'day one'* demonstrates the immediacy required for performance and it is expected that staff will perform well if they are suited to the task. The *'sink or swim'* approach to work is reinforced in a teleworking environment as new employees often find that there are seldom a lot of people in the office at the same time. There are no existing relationships to draw on for acquiring knowledge. This is quite widely recognised and they will presumably need to form strategies to manage relationships and knowledge acquisition. How do they go about this?

*'Plenty of people don't make it past 6 months' (Teleworker - High-Tech)*

While *'sink or swim'* implies that performance can be determined immediately, the use of *'six months'* implies a recognized time period, possibly linked to a probation. This stretch of time seems to play an important role in the selection process. The initial implication is that there is a high turnover which many organisations may find alarming. However it seems that it may actually be a beneficial strategy which provides an element of filtering on behalf of the organisation and self-selection among employees. Consequently if employees do make it past this initial period successfully the company can be assured that they have an *'independent thinker'* which is required for the role and the employee is likely to be content working in that kind of environment. To confirm this it will be necessary to consider how

managers view turnover within the organization. If managers use this approach as a selection strategy they may be unconcerned with the effects of telework on subordinates outcomes as telework is pivotal to their suitability and unfavourable outcomes help to establish this suitability. Asking the established and newer members of the workforce how they go about acquiring information, knowledge and learning in the absence of so many colleagues will also be necessary to determine what keeps them past *'the first six months'*.

**B.      *Creating fit through socialisation***

*'People can telework and obviously our company is all geared towards telework, but new joiners are office-based, which is the best way to integrate. Employees get a better feel by being in the office and seeing where people are and what they do, which sections people work in and how it all works together. We have a programme of graduate training and they do a number of tasks which are office-based. It is very important for them to be in the office for them to get to know Tel-Com and get to know the other people so they know what it's all about' (Manager Tel-Com)*

There is a real sense of needing to understand the way the company works at Tel-Com, despite the spread of the organisation and the extensive availability of tools for teleworking. The sense of corporate identity appears to be very important and it seems to be both achieved and demonstrated through using the technology (Memo set: 1) and maintaining presence within the office. There is an interesting juxtaposition between the attitude of employees, and especially managers, and the products and services supplied by the organisation. It seems that participants accept that their organisation is *'cutting edge'* and that they are part of the telecommunications industry (Memo set 1) but there is an attachment to the physical organisation. This attachment is potentially linked to the brand. The image of the organisation has not been long established and it may be felt necessary to retain presence to attempt to strengthen the image and encourage employees to identify with it. Alternatively it could be linked to tradition and established practices. It is necessary to investigate managers' perceptions of employees' image of the organisation and how this links to encouraged or required presence further.

**C.     *Demonstrating fit through office working***

*'You have to be a particular type of person to work for a local authority' (Senior Manager - Local-Gov).*

*'We make sure we keep up to date with what our clients want and need. That's how we provide a good service, when people join they know, or they should know, that this is required, I guess that's why most people want to work here. It's easy to see what is expected. They spend time in the central offices and it's important for them to keep everyone marching to the same tune' (Manager, no teleworking subordinates, Tel-Com).*

The first comment implies self-selected suitability for the job, which could prevent the need for office –based socialisation, reflecting High-Tech. But this does not appear to be the case in this environment. However, the second comment demonstrates that the self-selected suitability is into a culture that values the office and there is a reference to the '*central office*' which evokes a sense that it is the heart of the organisation. Office socialisation is inevitable and not spending time in the office would seemingly be counter-cultural as people are expected to '*know*' what they are getting into and what to '*expect*' from the culture. It seems that those who are appropriate to the organisations shouldn't be attracted to telework. Furthermore while people may have an inherent suitability, appropriate socialisation was considered to be essential for reinforcing the public service '*ethos*' which kept everyone '*marching to the same tune*'. This analogy seems to reflect the culture of accountability and responsibility to clients and to ensure consistency and demonstrate '*care*' this inevitably occurred '*on-the-job*'. Participation in office socialisation also appeared to signify commitment to '*ethos*' and demonstrate suitability to the role. Consequently there appears to be a sense at Local-Gov that telework would be inappropriate for new employees and, while used for retention would therefore not be used for recruitment. (Check how long participants have been on their teleworking arrangements and compare the experiences of those who have short and long tenures teleworking).

\*What appears evident is that while the ability to telework is a pre-requisite for '*fitting in*' to the organisational culture at High-Tech, fitting into the organisational culture appeared to

be a pre-requisite for teleworking at Local-Gov. In Tel-Com the more varied job roles and policies lead to diversity. Compare similar and different job roles at Tel-Com to investigate the differential effects teleworking has on employees' ability to 'fit in'.

## Appendix 6

### Example of Concept Card: Managers' perceptions of telework within subordinates' job types

	<b>Internal-Standardised</b>	<b>External Standardised</b>	<b>Non-technical-Team</b>	<b>Technical-Team</b>	<b>Internal-Independent</b>	<b>External-independent</b>
<b>Autonomy and Trust</b> – Trust less important when subordinates are remote ' <i>anyway</i> '	– Close supervision required – Responsible for subordinates' performance continuously – Subordinates easily demotivated – Subordinates defer to manager in non-standard situations	– Close supervision required – Responsible for subordinates' performance continuously – Subordinates easily demotivated – Subordinates defer to manager in non-standard situations	– Skilled - Task-based autonomy – Proximate team-based facilitation required – avoidance of free-riding – Measured on participation in the creative process	– Skilled-task-based autonomy – Distinguishable contribution – Presence on-line – Required to remind people in the organisation of their purpose	– Skilled Task-based autonomy – No ability to free-ride – Difficult performance measurement – ambiguous, no benchmark	– Skilled Task-based autonomy – No ability to free-ride – Objective measure – good service and added value for external clients
<b>Communication</b> – Distributed workers 'find a way to communicate'	– Emphasis on 'what's going on' within the organisation – Remote collaboration is unfamiliar confusing for subordinates	– 'grab who is needed' – convey changes in process quickly and correct issues immediately	– Maintain the creative flow – Physical presence at meetings – Provide teleworkers with non-interactive tasks	– Dialling into meeting acceptable – Extensive IM- Prefer a record – Scheduled meetings	– Remote communication OK for day to day purposes. – Physical presence required at meetings to retain authority	– 'Intense interactions' preferred - scheduled infrequently. – Regular conference calls
<b>Support and Wellbeing</b> – Managers also appreciate employees support	– Lack of required collaboration leads to concern about social isolation	– Emotional labour necessitates emotional support	– Emotional labour – necessitates emotional support – Team support and commitment important	– Telework can help overwork – manage work-flow – – Need to demonstrate support and commitment to the team symbolically	– Telework can help overwork – manage work-flow and inevitably challenging work-life balance – No need to demonstrate support to colleagues	– Telework can help overwork – manage work-flow and inevitably challenging work-life balance – No need to demonstrate support to colleagues



	<b>Internal-Standardised</b>	<b>External Standardised</b>	<b>Non-technical-Team</b>	<b>Technical-Team</b>	<b>Internal-Independent</b>	<b>External-independent</b>
<b>Conflict avoidance and relationship management</b> – Healthy levels of conflict differ by job.	– Requirement for office cover and different value placed on tasks can lead to inequity	– Fear that some subordinates requesting telework would lead to fear and resentment from others that jobs would be moved to telework	– Different value placed on tasks – ‘big personalities’ and ambiguous information necessitates facilitation – Potential for free-riding	– Sometimes need office cover – Information clearer and easier to convey – Individual contributions can be identified – On-line discussions are normal	– Issues of conflict not anticipated due to the lack of peer-level collaboration	– Issues of conflict not anticipated due to the lack of peer level collaboration
<b>Learning and Development</b> – Managers benefit from subordinates for learning. Social – introductions – Professional – shop floor experiences – ‘eyes and ears’	– Incidental learning – witnessing the ‘normal way’ others go about their work. – Subordinates miss the understanding of the overall business when Teleworking – Need to physically display attitude and personality to progress	– Incidental learning – witnessing the ‘normal way’ others go about their work. – Subordinates miss the understanding of the overall business when Teleworking – No natural career path – need to ‘get face known’ and network	– Manager is a coach. Difficult to monitor and help teleworkers – Tasks get divided into teleworking and non-teleworking. Teleworkers end up ‘operating in silos’ – Managers suffer reduced confidence in providing important or challenging tasks to teleworkers – <i>Vicious circle*</i>	– Technology can both provide and facilitate learning – Feedback communicable on line – Managers have personal experience of remote collaboration – Socialisation considered important for ‘learning how the team works’ – Need for presence after socialisation dependant on organisational factors	– Managers don’t feel personally responsible for learning and development – Subordinates find solutions to their own problems – Socialisation – important to learning about the organisation – Sufficient presence needed to ‘stay abreast’ of happenings in the organisation to assist performance and progression	– Managers don’t feel personally responsible for learning and development – Subordinates find solutions to their own problems – Subordinates can be socialised into a culture of independence and learn to become ‘independent thinkers’ by teleworking
<b>Suitability</b>	– Formal / informal telework unacceptable - only is special circumstances	– Formal / informal telework unacceptable and generally unavailable	– Formal telework – acceptable only is special circumstances, occasional informal acceptable	– Formal telework unsuitable unless the norm – informal suitable, can be extensive	– Formal / informal telework suitable where available. Extensive telework should be avoided	– Formal / informal telework often expected, necessary – extensive telework acceptable

## **Appendix 7**

### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS**

*REC Protocol Number*

#### **YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **An Investigation of Teleworking**

We would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

My name is Amanda Jones and I have selected you to take part in a study about teleworking which I am conducting in your organisation as part of my PhD qualification which I am undertaking at King's College London. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

The study aims to assess the attitudes and behaviours of teleworkers, their managers and organisation based staff with regards to these particular working arrangements. Benefits to you and other staff include the investigation and consideration of working arrangements in your organisation. I will use the findings of this study to make informed suggestions, reflecting your views, to management on the best way to carry out such arrangements.

I would like to conduct In-depth interviews with you individually which should take between approximately one hour. These interviews will be conducted on company premises, an alternative appropriate location or if more convenient or by phone. If you grant me permission, these interviews will be recorded and the recordings will be wiped upon transcription.

If you are receiving this information sheet, you should be a teleworker, a manager or an organisation-based worker who conducts similar work to any teleworker or supports teleworkers in their role.

The study should pose no immediate risks to you and you will not have to answer any questions with which you feel uncomfortable.

I hope to use my research skills and previous consulting experience to provide a useful analysis of and suggestions for your organisation which may be of benefit to you in the future.

Any information that you provide me with will be treated in the strictest confidence and reported back to the organisation as group data. Your individual identity will remain anonymous. Any data held by me about you will be destroyed after the research and will be used for no other purpose.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign the attached consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the way you are treated in the study.

If this study has harmed you in any way, or you have any further questions relating to the study, you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Researcher – Amanda Jones: email - [Amanda.j.jones@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:Amanda.j.jones@kcl.ac.uk)

Supervisor – Janet Walsh: Telephone – 02078483963, email – [janet.walsh@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:janet.walsh@kcl.ac.uk)

Thank you for your time it is greatly appreciated.

With kind regards,

Amanda Jones

## CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.



University of London

Title of Study: An Investigation of Teleworking in Multiple Occupations

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

- Thank you for considering to take part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.
- If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
- *I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.*
- *I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.*

Participant's Statement:

I \_\_\_\_\_

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Researcher's Statement:

I \_\_\_\_\_

Confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteer.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 8**

### **Types of voluntary teleworker**

Analysis revealed that of the 61 teleworkers, 48 were voluntary. Participants identified as the types of teleworkers are as follows:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Job roles represented</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>Enhancer</b>	17	2	19	internal-independent external-independent technical team non-technical team	High-Tech, Tel-Com
<b>Balancer</b>	2	8	10	internal-independent technical team non-technical team	Tel-Com, Local-Gov
<b>Reciprocators</b>	0	3	3	non-technical team internal-standardised	Tel-Com, Local-Gov
<b>Appeaser</b>	4	1	5	internal-independent	Tel-Com, Local-Gov
<b>Avoider</b>	4	1	5	internal-independent non-technical team	Tel-Com, Local-Gov
<b>Retainer</b>	0	4	4	non-technical team internal-standardised	Tel-Com, Local-Gov
<b>Unclassifiable</b>			2		